Heart Melter

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Heart Melter

by kipsi

Summary

Will is sure that this has to be one of his hallucinations, there's no other way to explain how he is suddenly a 7-year-old boy.

Notes

This is written for the prompt:
For some reason or another, Will is turned into a child, around 7 or 8, but still has the mind of his current age. Hannibal elects to take care of him until it wears off/they find a cure, whatevs.

I want Will to be the cutiest, pout-y-est kid ever.

No pedophilia please!

Bonus points: Hints of Hannibal/Will before he was changed.
Will having nightmares and curling up in Hannibal's bed to sleep with him.
Will changes back in the middle of a bath(which because of his small stature Hannibal had to help him with) and awkwardness happens.
Everyone cooing about how adorable Will is.

Chapter 1

Will had been working on his latest case for a while now, a bit longer than usual. The Chesapeake Ripper case had been on his mind constantly as well. Jack had urged him to concentrate more, and not to let his mind wander from the major objects.

It was no wonder that Will felt tired, but he also came to realize that no matter how knackered he was, he just couldn't sleep. It felt like his mind was pushing him down, suffocating him slowly with the images of Ripper's latest victims that just piled up one after another.

He had been tossing and turning on his bed for hours now, so he finally gave up and headed to his small kitchen to switch the coffee maker on. Will heard faint scratches as Winston shuffled to the kitchen tail flagging. He smiled at the dog briefly and patted its head, while he listened to the coffee drip to the pan, and looked out of his window admiring the dark night sky.

After the brief waiting he poured himself a large cup of coffee and took a sip of it, humming as the hot liquid made its way down his throat, warming him up. Will could still feel his mind whirring furiously, though the coffee relaxed him.

As Will finished his cup of coffee, he felt a curious tugging sensation going through his body. After a while it grew uncomfortably painful, and Will had to force his eyes shut against the unbearable agony. Hearing muffled with the pain, and he barely heard Winston whining by his side, when all of the sudden the pain he had felt was gone. He could hear again normally, and it took him a while to register that the irritable whirring of his mind had shut down.

Overly pleased with this new revelation Will opened his eyes, noticing he had shut them before. However, the scene that came upon his view unsettled him, and he stumbled back a few steps, bumping his head on the corner of his table. Will hissed at the contact and brought his hand to his head, wincing at the bump that was already forming under his fingertips. That's when he remembered his horror, turned his head towards Winston, who was sitting now in front of him, looking strangely bigger.

Firstly Will noticed that everything else looked massive as well. He spun around the kitchen and felt trapped in the middle of his furniture that had magically grown. When he absently remembered that he was still holding his empty cup, did he realize that something was definitely off.

Will stared at his hands that were now alarmingly smaller than before. He blinked a few times, placed the cup on the table and headed to the bathroom. Will was startled to a stop in front of his mirror, as he stared at his now 7-year-old self.

This had to be a hallucination.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will hadn't felt his mind this peaceful for years, so it was not a wonder that when his head finally rested against the plush pillow, he was instantly in deep sleep. What was even more pleasant was that he didn't have any nightmares for the rest of that night.

Will woke up to a knocking. He cursed inwardly and got out of the bed, placing his glasses on his nose while making his way sleepily to the door. His brain still fuzzy with sleep didn't pay any attention to the fact that the door handle was somehow higher than usual, when Will opened the door.

The view that greeted him made him freeze, Will was staring at someone's crotch. Eyes widening he gazed upwards making a brief eye contact with Doctor Lecter, who seemed to be first time thorougly shocked. Will saw with his brief glance that the doctor's face was again completely unruffled.

”Will?” Hannibal asked, his voice smooth with its accent.

Will couldn't get a word out of his mouth. Was he still dreaming? Was he trapped into one of his nightmares, hallucinations again? His gaze wandered to everything except Dr. Lecter.

”Will?” Hannibal's voice brought the empath out of his trance, eyes snapping again up, settling on the doctor's chin.

”I presume something rather unusual has happened to you,” Dr. Lecter said soothingly, taking notice of Will's appearance and distress. ”May I come in?” he asked. ”I brought breakfast with me, as I recalled that you enjoyed the previous ones,” he added, showing a small basket.

Will nodded and stepped aside, giving Hannibal room to come in. The man seemed unfazed by his appearance now that the first shock had subdued.Will felt a bit skittish and followed Hannibal to his kitchen, where the doctor was already preparing him breakfast on a plate.

The empath seated himself on the table and sighed. He was tired and terrified, and he couldn't understand what had happened to him. He could feel Hannibal's eyes on him constantly, watching his every move. He was relieved to get a plate in front of him so he had something to do besides thinking of his unfortunate state. The silence couldn't last forever, though.

”Will” Hannibal started evenly, ”I must say that I was quite surprised, when you opened the door.” Will hummed around his mouthful of fried bacon.

”I'm a bit curious of your current state though. I'm also a bit worried too, because you haven't spoken a word since I arrived.”

Will catched the doctor's curious gaze, and lowered his eyes to the food.

”It's delicious,” he said then, faintly. The sound of his voice startled him, his eyes enormous, with embarrassment bubbling to the surface making him blush.

Hannibal looked amused by this new discovery, his lips curving into a small smile. Will shoved more bacon into his mouth so he wouldn't have to say anything more.

The good doctor left Will to his breakfast as he decided to make a phone call to Jack. Better tell him that the empath was incapable of work for a while.

As Dr. Lecter returned to the kitchen, had Will finished his breakfast, and was now hugging Winston on the floor. The sight was quite adorable, if he let himself think about it. Winston was licking Will's now smaller fingers and flagging its tail enthusiastically. Will laughed his new – higher laugh as the dog's licks tickled him.

The now young boy's head sprung up, as he noticed that he was being watched again. The laughter died like it hadn't ever existed, and Will's face shut down. Hannibal watched the progress silently, interested. When Will was getting up from the floor, Hannibal decided to inform him about the phone call.

”I called Jack,” he stated as Will's eyes widened. ”I told him that you are taking a break from the work for a while.”

”Did you tell him about this – this state I'm in?” Will inquired nervously, already hating this new voice of his.

”No,” the doctor replied, and saw immediately how the boy in front of him relaxed.

”Would you mind telling me what exactly happened to you, Will?” Hannibal asked, as he let his eyes bore into the dark brown mop of hair.

Will fidgetted a bit, his nervousness surfacing again. He shook his head as he confessed: ”I don't know.”

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so this is all I've written for now. I'd really like to know what you think of it, as this is my first fic in this fandom. ♥

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It had taken Hannibal a long time to get Will to talk to him about anything at all, and even then he hadn't gotten any answers. The empath seemed to dislike his new voice so much, that he just preferred to sit silently in the middle of his living room, surrounded by his dogs. The doctor was however a patient man, and he didn't have any appointments arranged for a couple of hours, so he settled into an armchair. Will took note of it, but didn't stir from the floor.

Will had also come to realize that along his change of voice, he couldn't do as much as before. His legs weren't as cooperative as before, when he had stumbled around the house looking things from the new perspective he had now. It seemed that he had to get used to his now shorter limbs, which didn't please him at all. Being frustrated with this new development he sat sulkily on the floor and hadn't moved since.

What Will found even worse, was that he hadn't even noticed that he only wore his now enormous t-shirt, boxer shorts lost into his bed sheets. His shirt was long enough to cover his whole body though, so it was like wearing a tunic. Hannibal hadn't commented on it, probably because he didn't want to embarrass him further, or later on because he knew as well as Will, that he didn't own any appropriate clothes on his new size.

Being this short was only a disadvantage, the list of things he couldn't do anymore was long. The most irritating things were that he couldn't reach his cabinets without a chair, and couldn't lift anything heavy, because now he was lighter than before.

Will cursed silently in his mind and hoped that this, whatever this was, would pass quickly. He had killers to catch, and he doubted that Jack had taken the news well – most likely not. He pondered what Hannibal had come up with as an explanation. With this thought on mind, he shifted his eyes to where the doctor sat silently, definitely waiting for his next move.

Taking the gaze as a sign, Dr. Lecter crossed his legs as he always did when they were having a session, and looked at him expectantly. Will frowned, and tried to avoid speaking at any cost, but became soon anguished under the man's stare. He didn't like being watched so closely, and he knew that Dr. Lecter was doing it purposely. Finally he couldn't just take it anymore, and snapped: ”What?”

His voice made him even more angry, and so did the doctor, who just sat there unmoving, unaffected by his outburst. The dogs around him sensed the new atmosphere and moved, slightly worried.

”Nothing at all, my dear William. I was just waiting for you to start this conversation that we should have,” Hannibal replied calmly, without any hint of hurt of the anger directed at him.

”And what conversation would that be?” Will asked, still irritated that Hannibal could be so composed.

”What we're going to do about this situation we're in. More precisely, what we're going to do about you,” Dr. Lecter answered, sensing the other's annoyance.

Will watched at the doctor's crossed legs and didn't say anything. He didn't like where this talk was going. He sighed.

”I'm the same as always, only in a different kind of body,” Will stated.

”We haven't talked about that yet,” Hannibal pointed out, ”you haven't wanted to tell me anything,” he added.

The empath lowered his eyes to his small hands on his lap, hating how delicate they looked. He had really hoped that this could've been only a hallucination, then he wouldn't have had this conversation, and he would've snapped out of it sooner or later, and found himself to be as normal as he ever would be.

”Will?” the doctor's voice brought him out of his thoughts, and Will glared at his hands. Better get this over with, he thought bitterly.

”I'm fine. As fine as I can be,” he started and pulled his lips into a sour smile. ”I have my memory intact, my *abilities*, all is the same. Except I'm stuck like this,” Will continued, his voice rising hysterical. He really hated this.

”The only problem that I have, is that I'm like this, and I can't do anything! There's nothing I can do, as I don't even know why I became like this! What if I have to live like this for the rest of my life? What if I have to grow again, start my life again like this? I can't do that – I can't do this, I can't,” Will was shaking now, bringing hands to his eyes, pressing, so that he saw black spots.

He started to hyperventilate, and felt tears in his eyes now that he had lowered his hands, blurring his view. All of this was getting the better of him. Will's feelings were all over the place, and he hated himself for being this weak. Apparently this new body of his was more vulnerable than he presumed.

He heard as Hannibal got up and walked to his side and kneeled, put a reassuring hand on his shoulder and squeezed lightly.

”Will, take steady deep breaths,” he spoke soothingly. ”You're all right, breathe.”

Will struggled to obey, and found that he soon got his breathing under control again, as the doctor rubbed small circles into his back. He felt embarrassed, because he had to resort to Hannibal again. The forgotten tears spilled on his cheeks, and Hannibal wiped them away with his thumb. Will hadn't ever felt as vulnerable as he felt now, in this small form, in the good doctor's hands.

”You're all right,” Hannibal said again, bringing his hand to the boy's head, stroking his hair. Will nodded hesitantly.

”I'm tired,” he mumbled then, avoiding eye contact.

Dr. Lecter rose up and brought Will to his feet with him. He smiled a bit as he let go of the empath.

”That's completely normal after that emotional outburst you just had,” Hannibal stated. ”Go to sleep, dear Will. I'll come and see you on lunch.”

Will hesitated a bit, but nodded then and started to wander to his bedroom. Hannibal watched as the boy disappeared from his view, and turned then to leave.

This was going to be interesting.

Chapter End Notes

I can't wait to write all of the cuteness that's bound to happen.

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The first couple of hours crawled, as Dr. Lecter greeted his other patients and listened to their problems, only with half an ear. His thoughts were on Will Graham, and he was trying to come up with a valid cause for all of this. He'd never seen anything like that, and he was very certain that it wasn't normal at all to suddenly change like that. He doubted that his medical books were of any help for this.

He had been thoroughly surprised, when Will had opened the front door. The only reason that he had recognized the child as Will had been his face. It was rounder and without its usual stubble, but the eyes were the same, although bigger and a bit brighter. His hair was just as messy as usual, and the glasses were the same, except they didn't fit as well as before, since his head was now smaller. He had to admit that the sight had been rather cute, when Will had opened the door still being sleepy, rubbing at his eyes.

Hannibal had a plan forming in his head, as he bid goodbye to his last patient for now, and shut the door after him. He finally got to have his lunch break, as it was already quarter past twelve. He grabbed his coat and suitcase, and headed to his car, which he had parked in front of the building. It wasn't going to take a long drive to get to Wolf Trap.

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Will had been sleeping soundly since Hannibal had left him on his own. The dogs had sensed the boy's distress, and they had all climbed into his bed after a while, enclosing him into their embrace. Will felt warm and secured for the first time in a long while. He didn't have any dreams for once, and didn't sweat at all.

The empath's hair was sticking out, as he had changed his posture many times in his sleep, and his shirt was wrapped up around his little body. He didn't need sheets to keep himself warm, the dogs were enough to give him their body heat. Will had Winston by his side, and the dog nuzzled itself against Will's head.

The dogs fidgeted, as they heard a knock on the front door, and three of them shuffled and sat on Will, who was startled awake, feeling terrified, as he was left under them. The dogs were heavy, so he couldn't do anything at all, but just lie on the bed and hope that they noticed him.

Will heard more knocking, and then a door opening – apparently he had forgotten to lock it. The dogs were hovering over him, making noise. It was starting to become uncomfortable where he lied, and he could feel another panic attack surfacing. He couldn't breathe properly, as dog hair was everywhere, and he started to panic as the dogs didn't move at all. What if he suffocated under them? Will tried to writhe out, but found himself unable to move.

Just then he heard a noise coming from the living room. It had to be Dr. Lecter, Will was sure of it. He had said that he would come to see him on lunch. The empath felt relieved, but also

mortified, as he came to realize that the doctor would see him like this – stuck under his dogs.

As he was thinking all of the terribly awkward scenarios, did Hannibal came to his bedroom door. He couldn't see him very well behind all of the dog fur, but he heard an intake of breath.

”Will, are you all right in there?” he heard Hannibal say.

He could only let out a faint: ”No,” and he feared for a moment that the doctor hadn't heard him, but felt then the dogs shift as Hannibal shooed them away. Will felt grateful, just this once. He didn't like it when his dogs were treated like that, he loved them with all of his heart, and he hated to see them unhappy, but this time it was appreciated.

Hannibal stared down at him, where he lied on his crumpled sheets, hair all over the place. Will rose up quickly and sat on the edge of his bed, feeling that he could breathe again. He didn't face the doctor, when he mumbled his thanks to him.

”I brought you lunch,” Hannibal said, as he turned around and started to make his way to the kitchen. Will followed behind him, and sighed. This was becoming a routine.

The boy ate what was put in front of him, and didn't pay much attention to the doctor, because he felt again observed and didn't like how it made him feel. It didn't take a very long time for him to finish the last bite, as he was hungry. He thanked silently for the meal.

”Now that you've eaten, I have something for you,” Hannibal said mysteriously, smiling slightly. Will lifted his head up, and looked at the man curiously.

The doctor brought a plastic bag from the living room and handed it to Will. The empath regarded it with confusion, and then looked what it contained inside. His cheeks flushed red, as he stared at the clothes that he saw. There were small, sky-blue jeans, a couple of t-shirts with prints of dogs, which Will found thoroughly embarrassing, as he imagined himself wearing them. There were also plain black socks and boxer shorts, and Will was *definitely not* thinking about how Hannibal had picked *boxer shorts* for him.

He lifted his eyes to the doctor's shoulder and didn't know what to say. This whole situation was ridiculous, but he couldn't laugh either. Hannibal didn't seem to mind his silence, though.

”You should dress,” Dr. Lecter stated. ”I wouldn't like to take you out like that,” he added then, amused. That got Will's attention.

”Out?” he asked, unsurely. He didn't want to go out like this, everyone would stare at him. Hannibal seemed to read his thoughts, as the corners of his lips turned up a bit.

”Yes, I'm taking you with me. I doubt that you can look after yourself at your current state, as we have already noticed that,” Hannibal replied. Will looked unsettled.

”What about my dogs?” he asked then, an edge of worry in his voice.

Dr. Lecter shifted his eyes to the living room, where he knew the dogs were. He didn't really like the idea of them in his house – it would be messy.

”We can come and see them daily,” he answered then, noticing how Will seemed relieved.

The empath stood still for a while, but muttered then that he was going to change, and disappeared into his bedroom. Hannibal walked to the living room and took a seat on the couch and waited for the boy to appear again. It took only a few minutes.

Will stopped in the living room's doorway and glanced at the doctor briefly. All of the clothes had fitted him. Now that he had gotten rid of that enormous t-shirt, he wore the jeans and a dark red t-shirt, that had a print of an Australian shepherd dog in it. He felt absurd wearing these clothes, and maybe it showed on his face, because Hannibal seemed once again amused. The boy pouted, as he made his way to the centre of the room.

”Good. It looks like they were the right size,” the doctor commented, pleased. Will shrugged.

”Where are we going?” Will asked hesitantly. He didn't really want to go out, he feared that someone would recognize him, even though he was a child now.

”I still have a couple of patients for today, dear Will. My lunch break is almost over, so we better get going,” Hannibal replied.

Will sighed and didn't look pleased, but agreed anyway.

Chapter End Notes

Oh, this is going to be good.
I'm so sorry, Will, but I really like to see you uncomfortable and embarrassed, and I bet so does Hannibal. He's going to enjoy this a lot.. lol.

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal helped a reluctant Will to his seat in his car, as the boy hadn't really gotten hold of his seat belt. The empath sulked for the first fifteen minutes of the car ride, and hadn't said anything at all. Hannibal didn't mind, as he liked the silence. Actually, he was secretly pleased that Will hadn't changed completely, because noisy children were frustrating to deal with. He hoped that Will wouldn't be like them, and hopefully wouldn't throw any tantrums publicly, preferable none at all.

When they sat in the car for half an hour, the boy seemed more curious to explore his surroundings – which he blamed on the transformation. It wasn't like he hadn't ever been in this car before, as Dr. Lecter occasionally drove him to the crime scenes, but he really wanted to see what that one round button would do.

The doctor appeared to sense the change in the atmosphere, as he shifted his eyes briefly to the boy, who was sitting next to him, his finger already hovering above the button.

”Will,” Hannibal warned, voice smooth.

The empath withdrew his finger and pouted slightly. He wanted to know what it was for.

”What is it, Dr. Lecter?” he asked then, trying not to sound uncertain. Hannibal sat once again fully composed, giving nothing away of his current thoughts.

”Did you sleep well?” Hannibal asked, baffling him with the question.

This time Will didn't have to even think about the answer, as he knew perfectly well that he slept very well indeed. He hadn't had any nightmares at all for the past few times now, when he had slept. It struck to him as odd.

”I didn't have any nightmares,” he confessed then, ”I haven't had nightmares since I changed,” he added, puzzled now that he had said it aloud. Dr. Lecter looked at Will, thoughtful.

”That's interesting,” he commented, and asked then: ”Have you lost time?”

Will shook his head. He didn't have any symptoms as had before. It seemed like the changing had actually cured him, which he found laughable.

”Maybe it's something like a defense mechanism,” Dr. Lecter suggested, ”Your mind couldn't take it anymore, so it found a different kind of solution for your problems.”

Will pondered if that was true. The theory seemed perfectly sound, though, so maybe Dr. Lecter was right. He started to wonder what it meant then, if his mind had decided to shut

itself down. Would he be left like this, in a fragile body of a young boy, because his psyche seemed to think that it would spare him from the traumas and pain?

He didn't like this, even though the idea of not being hunted by nightmares and hallucinations fascinated him, he didn't want to be stuck like this forever.

They were getting closer to their destination, Will noted, as he looked out of the window and saw the familiar buildings and trees sliding past them. There were people on the streets, going about their daily routines, and Will felt jealous of them, because he was sure that none of them had to face daily as many horrors as him. Working with the FBI had made him realize how terrifying humans could be, but being an empath he had come to accept that fact. Maybe it said something of him also.

As he was not paying attention to his surroundings for a few minutes, Will noticed that they finally stopped moving. Hannibal was still seated by his side, and was watching him. Will lifted his head a bit, but didn't make eye contact. When the doctor saw that the boy was again surfaced out his thoughts, did he say silently: ”We're here.”

Hannibal got out of the car, and Will removed his seat belt carefully. He opened the car door and hopped out, watching out for his head at the same time. They were right on time for Dr. Lecter's next session with his patient, and when they entered the building and headed to the waiting room, the said patient was already waiting there, sitting on a comfy chair.

She was in her mid-thirties, and dressed smartly to a jacket and a skirt. Will felt odd looking at her from his perspective. Now that they were here, he didn't have any idea what he was supposed to do while Dr. Lecter saw his patients.

He didn't have to wait for long, as the doctor ushered him to another chair, and disappeared then into his office. He returned shortly, and handed Will a notebook and a pencil. The empath regarded them doubtfully.

”Dr. Lecter? What am I to do with these?” he asked then, as he had no idea what the doctor had in mind.

”You have to wait some time for me to finish, so I thought it would be better if you had something to do with your time. Therefore, I brought you a sketchbook,” Hannibal stated.

”I'm not a child!” Will exclaimed, and saw how the doctor smiled a bit.

After that Dr. Lecter turned to his patient and called her in. The woman looked delighted, and before she disappeared into his office, she glanced at Will, amused.

”Is he yours?” Will heard her ask.

”No,” Hannibal answered to her question, and looked shortly at Will, coming to close the door.

”Ah, your friend's, then. He's quite adorable!” the woman cooed, and Will felt a blush rising into his cheeks.

The empath could swear that he saw a faint grin, when Hannibal closed the door. Will glared at the sketchbook, as he picked it up. He wasn't very good at drawing, to be honest. Still, he decided to scribble at least something, because he didn't have anything else to do.

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It's been a few hours now, since Will first sat into his chair. The sketchbook lay by his side, the first two pages full of his attempts to draw Winston. They were better than stick figures, but otherwise very poor.

All of Dr. Lecter's patients had been watching him curiously, as they entered the waiting room. Will had first been overly nervous under their gaze, but had then succeeded in ignoring them. He didn't like how being observed felt, especially now that he was smaller. It felt like everyone hovered over him, and he didn't have any space.

Will pushed his glasses up his nose, and tried to hide behind the lenses, that gave him little security. It seemed like especially women were more interested in him, than men. They all asked questions about him from Dr. Lecter that unsettled him. However, the doctor appeared unaffected, as always.

Will waited impatiently as the last patient for the day bid farewell to Dr. Lecter and left. Just as he was about to rise up from his seat, did Hannibal came from his office to his side, carrying his suitcase with him.

”What have you drawn?” he asked then, curious, while studying the sketchbook that lay closed.

Will snatched it, and held it close to himself, out of the doctor's reach. Dr. Lecter watched at him for a moment, but didn't pursue the subject further.

”You can have that one, I have plenty of them,” he said instead, and proceeded with locking his office's door.

The empath rose up from his seat and followed Hannibal out of the building, and into his car. He held the sketchbook in his hands, and waited Dr. Lecter to start the car.

”Where are we going?” he questioned, as he raised his eyes to the doctor's briefly.

”Home,” Dr. Lecter answered simply, ”I assume you're already hungry, so I'm thinking of preparing dinner for us, dear Will,” he added.

”Oh,” the boy exhaled, realizing now that he actually was quite hungry.

The ride didn't take a long time, and they were soon in front of Hannibal's house. The doctor let Will inside, and the boy started to take in his surroundings. He hadn't been to Dr. Lecter's house often, but a few of times. The second visit had been embarrassing – he had somehow ended up on his doorstep, still asleep. Hannibal had let him inside that time as well, and soothed him, while he had been hysterical, terrified of himself.

Hannibal headed to the kitchen, placing his suitcase to the hallway's table. Will popped his head to every room in the hallway, before accompanying the man to the kitchen. The empath saw that he had already rolled his shirt sleeves up and tied an apron around his waist. Dr. Lecter raised his gaze from the chopping board, and looked at Will questioningly.

”Can I help?” Will asked hesitantly. He wanted to be of some help, as he had only relied on the doctor lately.

Hannibal appeared to consider the offer, and bowed his head then to a faint nod.

”You may want to wash the vegetables and chop them,” he suggested, while washing his hands and then drying them on a kitchen towel.

Will washed his hands as well, and did then as he was told. He had to stand on a small chair to be able to chop the tomatoes. It took an awful long time, and the tomatoes were practically crushed, but Hannibal didn't seem to mind. Will sensed that he was keeping the man waiting, and tried to be faster, but succeeded only slicing a shallow cut into his finger.

The boy hissed, and was about to bring the finger into his mouth, when Hannibal's hand took hold of his hand. He was taken to the sink, where the doctor cleaned his finger, and wrapped a band-aid on it.

”I think it's better if you don't go near sharp objects, when you're like this,” Dr. Lecter stated, and patted at Will's head, while he pouted.

The dinner ended up to be one of the best Will had ever had, and he asked for more, which pleased Hannibal greatly. He liked to see Will eating his meals, because he could see from his expressions just how much he appreciated the food he was served.

”This is so good,” he heard Will say, as he had just swallowed another bite. The boy licked his lips, smearing sauce on them.

It seemed like he had become more messy with eating recently, and it also seemed like his appetite had increased. Hannibal decided that it wasn't a bad thing at all.

”I'm glad you like it, my good Will,” the man replied, and sipped at his wine.

He hadn't served wine to the empath, even though he had been stating again that ”he wasn't a kid!”. Hannibal had been amused, when he had handed him a glass of water, and told the boy that they didn't know how his body would react to the alcohol. Will had been silent a while after that.

Now that they had finished dinner, Dr. Lecter could see how tired the boy was. His eyes were almost closed, and his head appeared to become heavier with sleepiness.

The doctor rose up and gathered the plates to place them into the sink, and returned to the dining room to find Will sleeping. He watched the boy for a while, but approached him then, placing his hand on the empath's shoulder, giving it a squeeze.

”Will,” he called, as he squeezed at the boy's shoulder again. Will mumbled something, and opened his eyes displeased.

”Will, you can't sleep here,” Hannibal said, as he let his hand fall away from Will's shoulder.

The empath staggered onto his feet, and looked at the doctor's vest and its buttons distracted. He heard faintly, as Dr. Lecter asked him to follow him, and he obeyed. Will hadn't felt this sleepy for ages.

When Hannibal opened a door to a guest room, which had a plush bed in it, Will felt that he could just collapse into it, and then immediately fall asleep. However, the doctor seemed to know what he was thinking, and had none of it, as he handed him pajamas. The fabric was smooth, and it took him a while to realize that they were silk.

Will was too tired to comment on it, though, so he just thanked and changed to the pajamas. He didn't need to watch behind his back to know that Hannibal was waiting for him to finish changing. The doctor had turned his back to the boy to give him some privacy, as he knew that he appreciated it, but he wanted to make sure that he got into the bed and didn't fall asleep on the floor.

Soon Will was tucked into the bed, and Hannibal folded his clothes, that he had scattered all over the floor. The doctor pursed his lips at the boy's messiness, as he placed the clothes on a chair.

Then he looked over to the bed, and saw that the empath was already in deep sleep. He walked to his side, and brushed the hair away from his forehead. After that he made his way to the door, and closed it with a faint: ”Good night, dear Will.”

Chapter End Notes

Everyone cooing about how adorable Will is. ✓
One done. Three (?) to go.

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The nightmares didn't come. Will slept with a slight smile on his face, and hugged the covers into his chest, as he had peaceful dreams for the first time in many years. He was playing with his dogs, running with them, the still damp grass from the rain clinging to his bare feet. It was pleasant to be outside, when the sky was now crystal clear, and the wind hummed soothingly.

Will's dogs trailed behind him, as he made his way to the front door of his house. Will was about to open the door, when it opened in front of him, revealing a heavenly scent. The empath didn't bother to clean his feet when he stepped inside, it was his home after all, and followed the scent to his kitchen, leaving grass behind him with every new step.

His kitchen was for once spotless, and it truly puzzled him, until he saw a familiar figure in front of the stove. Will didn't say anything when the doctor faced him, and lifted the other corner of his lips into a half-smile.

The scent of scrambled eggs was drowning him.

**

Will fluttered his eyes open, squinting a bit when the light sun's rays splayed on his face. It took him a while to register where he was, as he rose up from the bed. The pajamas felt foreign on his skin, since they were so soft, and when he spotted a mirror propped up on a table, did he take a look of himself.

He hadn't noticed the color or the pattern of the pajamas last night, because he had been so sleepy, but now that he saw his reflection on the mirror, he blushed bright red. He couldn't believe that Hannibal had actually purchased these, but then again it wasn't a surprise at all.

He was wearing dark blue pajamas, and they had been printed with small dog heads. It was obvious that the doctor had picked only dog-themed clothes for him. This new revelation made his ears burn with embarrassment. Why couldn't have he bought normal clothes?

He couldn't mull with these thoughts any longer though, because he soon realized that he still smelled the scrambled eggs. Apparently that hadn't been only a dream then.

Will decided to change his clothes before going downstairs, as he felt overly self-conscious in his pajamas. He glanced to the chair, and saw that his yesterday's clothes had been replaced with new ones. Dr. Lecter had been in this room when he had slept, probably checking up on him like an overly concerned parent. The thought made Will skittish.

The boy unfolded the new clothes on the bed and stared at them. They were not better than his previous ones, although he had to admit that liked the colors. This time, the jeans were

dark blue, and the t-shirt forest green with small prints of bones. Will rolled his eyes and changed. Once again they fit perfectly, and the boy wondered how the man had predicted his measurements.

Without glancing back, he opened the door and made his way downstairs, where the scent grew stronger. He breathed it in, and felt his mouth water, as he approached the kitchen. The boy practically ran into the doctor, when he was stepping inside the kitchen. Hannibal seemed faintly surprised, but turned then to proceed with his cooking.

”I was about to come and wake you up,” he said, joyfully flipping a crepe on the pan, ”but apparently that's not necessary.”

Will watched curiously as he was handed a plate with scrambled eggs with two small sausages, and then his eyes wandered to the frying pan.

”Oh don't worry, you'll get these as well,” Dr. Lecter stated, having caught the look.

”You have to eat well, as breakfast is the most important meal of the day,” the man said, pleased when Will started to put food into his mouth.

They sat in a silence for a while, enjoying the crepes with fresh strawberries and whipped cream. Will licked at his lips, catching the cream that had smeared on the corners of his lips. Dr. Lecter watched him silently for a while until he leaned a bit forward and wiped a bit of cream from the tip of his nose.

Will didn't comment on it, but he found the gesture somehow reassuring. He was finishing up his crepe when Dr. Lecter asked him of his night.

”I didn't have any nightmares,” Will replied hesitantly.

Hannibal cleared the table while listening to the empath's story of his dream. The boy didn't mention anything about seeing Hannibal in it, though. He wasn't even sure what that all had been about.

Will helped this time with the dishes, even though Dr. Lecter had reassured him that it wasn't necessary. The boy was more careful this time, but there were no sharp kitchen knives in the sink, as Dr. Lecter had taken care of them earlier. A slight smile played on his lips.

”Can we go and see my dogs?” the empath asked later on, when they had put the dishes away.

Hannibal considered the question a few seconds, and bowed his head then as a yes. Will's face brightened up and his eyes seemed to sparkle for a moment, when the doctor watched him. He knew that the dogs were everything to him, and he hadn't failed not to sense how even just mentioning them – especially Winston, brought a faint smile on his face.

The doctor had never seen the appeal of taking a pet himself, as they were usually very messy. He hated to think about his house in a chaos that the animal would have caused. He had wondered why Will was so fascinated by dogs, and came to realize later on that they

were quite alike. The empath was like a misunderstood puppy, which had no home or family to go to, but searched a person who would understand him, care for him.

Hannibal had been pleased with this new knowledge and he had been interested in pursuing the prospect further, and then Will had changed. He had been given the chance with on a silver platter, and he was going to enjoy this new development as far as he could.

**

They arrived at Will's house around ten o'clock. The boy was delighted to see his dogs again, and when they went to open the front door they could already hear their muffled sounds behind it, waiting impatiently to get outdoors.

Will wasn't prepared when the dogs rushed out, almost running him over. Hannibal took hold of his arms and rebalanced him, when he almost fell on the ground. Will laughed a bit, after the first shock had died down. Dr. Lecter let go of him and fed the dogs as they circled him, sniffing at his three-piece suit.

”They really must have been hungry,” Will murmured while petting the dogs seperately, when they were satisfied and came to greet him again.

Hannibal watched the scene with small interest and said nothing. It seemed that Winston was the most restless, as it shuffled impatiently around Will and then suddenly leaped on him, when the boy least expected it. The empath fell on the ground and tried to scold the dog, but started to laugh, when Winston started to lick his face.

Dr. Lecter pressed his lips together in a stright line. The ground was rather muddy, and now Will was even more filthy, as the dog spread its bacteria on his face. Hannibal felt repulsed.

It took a while to Will get the dog off of him, and when he rose to stand did he realized that his clothes were in a need of a wash. He righted his glasses and turned to look at Dr. Lecter, who was standing in front of the still open door, expression slightly displeased.

”Um, did you bring any spare clothes?” Will asked awkwardly.

”Luckily I have something with me, yes,” Hannibal replied, and went to the car to retrieve spare clothes.

”You should take a bath,” he said then, observing Will's face that showed discomfort.

Will nodded after a while, and then they made their way indoors. The empath hadn't had a proper bath for a long time. He had preferred taking showers, after he had noticed the hallucinations and the gaps of lost time, fearing that he might drown himself.

He still didn't feel completely sure about the idea, and when they stopped to the bathroom did Will notice that the bathtub was bigger and deeper because of his small form. He shivered a bit, and took a step back bumping his back to Hannibal's legs.

The doctor noticed his anxiety and brought his hand to the boy's head, petting his hair a while. He felt Will relaxing to the touch and smiled to himself.

”I can assist you, if you feel uneasy with the idea of bathing by yourself,” he offered then, soothingly, still petting the empath.

Will's ears burned red, and he nodded lightly. The good doctor started the bath, letting the warm water flow to the tub, as he added soap into the water – a bubble bath seemed suitable this time. They waited patiently until the tub was full, and then Will saw it appropriate to start to undress, although this time he felt more self-conscious because he was fully awake.

Hannibal gave him room though, and the boy felt glad of it. Soon he was sitting in the bathtub, surrounded by bubbles and foam. The water reached to his shoulders, and he liked the warmth of it, clinging to his body.

Dr. Lecter approached him slowly and made his way to the cabinet behind the boy. The good doctor had rolled his sleeves up, and Will watched fascinated his now visible arms that usually were covered with the suit jackets.

Soon the hands were on his head, washing his hair, and Will relaxed under the light pressure of the man's fingertips, closing his eyes to enjoy the sensation. No one had washed his hair or massaged his head for so long that he had forgotten how good it felt. Will hummed with pleasure.

After washing the boy's hair did Hannibal moved on sponging his way from Will's back to his chest. The boy squirmed a few times, ticklish, and Hannibal smirked a bit when he sucked in a breath, startled as he realized how ticklish he was.

It didn't take long for Dr. Lecter to wash all of the dirt and mud away, and soon Will was again clean. The doctor retrieved a towel and was about to start tousling Will's hair when the empath nervously informed him that he could do dry himself well enough on his own.

Hannibal handed him the towel and patted his head, as he made his way out of the bathroom, smile playing on his lips as he closed the door behind him.

Chapter End Notes

I have to confess that I had serious problems with writing *"scrambled eggs"*, because someone mentioned on Tumblr that Hannibal would eat *"scrambled legs"* for breakfast. XD

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will couldn't believe his eyes. Dr. Lecter had left him dark blue coveralls on the toilet lid. The clothing choices were just getting worse, and he couldn't believe that someone as good dresser as Hannibal would actually want him to wear these.

Unfortunately, he didn't have anything else to wear, because his other clothes were still muddy. He swore under his breath, as he dressed himself, and made his way grumpily to the living room, where the doctor sat, far away from the dogs that were still in need of a good wash.

Will ignored the dogs and glared at Dr. Lecter, when the man turned his head towards him. The doctor didn't say anything, but the empath could swear that he saw a slight blink of amusement in his eyes.

”What are these?” the boy asked displeased, pointing at his clothes.

He was faced with silence, which didn't last long.

”I thought it would be more comfortable to wear clothes that don't matter if they happen to get dirty,” Hannibal answered smoothly.

”Do I have to go out like this?” Will asked then, thinking again scenarios in which someone he knew might bump into him on the street.

Dr. Lecter didn't say anything, but the empath gathered that the answer was yes. He scowled and walked then to his dogs, asking them to follow him. The doctor watched with interest as he guided the dogs to the terrace and proceeded then to bear bucket to them, almost toppling over it. He filled it with warm water, and soon Hannibal understood what Will was up to.

Washing the dogs took longer than the doctor had first suspected, but he didn't mind. He liked to watch Will in his own element, taking care of his loved pets. It was quite entertaining to watch though, because the bigger dogs almost over powered him, as they weren't very fond of the bath. Will had foam on his now soft and clean hair, and his glasses were full of water drops.

The boy hummed lightly, while he dried the dogs, using a hair dryer. Hannibal had took the opportunity and entered the kitchen, already making them lunch. He hadn't any patients today, and so he had formed some plans for the day. It was time to take Will outside.

**

”Where are we going?” Will asked unsettled, while trying to keep the same walking pace as the doctor, dodging strangers that were every time brushing too close to him.

Dr. Lecter didn't give anything away when he answered: ”You'll see.” It made the empath only more skittish, and when the next stranger almost bumped into him, did Will take a hold of Hannibal's suit sleeve.

He felt terrified, almost suffocating with all of these people around him. Maybe it was the view that unsettled him, being able to see only from above. He felt so small that the strangers seemed gigantic, trying to step on him and squish him into nothingness. Will felt light headed for a moment, feeling how his heart hammered in his chest, trying to jump out of his ribcage. It was like someone tried to strangle him, the pressure on his neck constant.

Black spots were forming in his view, when he felt reassuring and a warm hand rubbing at his back. He surfaced from the darkness and gasped air into his lungs.

”Are you all right, Will?” Dr. Lecter asked concerned, still rubbing small circles into his back.

Will took long steady breaths and nodded. He wasn't completely all right, but better at least. He hated these panic attacks, and it seemed ironic that now when he didn't have any nightmares, he had to deal with fear more when he was awake. The empath hoped that he wouldn't have to be like this for long anymore.

Dr. Lecter let go of his neck, and Will was momentarily struck with dread because of the loss, but found his hand soon joined with Hannibal's. The empath was silently thankful as they continued their walk to the unknown destination.

**

”You've got to be kidding me,” Will stated, as he stared the park owlishly.

”I'm not,” the doctor replied, taking a seat on a bench.

The park was for kids, that was for sure. There were all kinds of gadgets that children usually loved; swings, a slide, climbing frames etc. The park was enormous, framed with large trees and small benches, apparently for parents to sit and watch their children to play. The grass was green and trimmed, giving a welcoming view of it.

There were many kids building sand cakes, playing hopscotch and tag. A few families had spread a blanket on the grass and were having a picnic.

Will turned to face the doctor again, glaring at him.

”I'M NOT A KID! WHAT THE HELL, DR. LECTER?!” he exclaimed, letting his frustration out for the first time properly.

”Keep your voice down, Will. We don't want the other kids to pick up your foul language,” Hannibal scolded him, sensing that the outburst had gotten a few curious eye pairs on them.

Will sat on the bench, far away from Dr. Lecter on the other side of it, eyes blazing with anger. The doctor let him have his space, as he leaned his back into the bench and watched

the others. No one seemed to be eyeing them anymore, which was good. He didn't like staring – it was rude.

There was a light breeze, and the trees hugged their leaves whilst the sun warmed the ground. Will shut his eyes against it, and basked on the sunlight, feeling warm and finally more peaceful. He had his feelings under check again, and now he began to think how terribly rude he had been to the doctor. He glanced at Dr. Lecter and saw him looking at him, their eyes locking for a brief moment, until Will averted his eyes. He proceeded on observing a butterfly, which had settled on a small flower in front of them.

”I'm sorry,” he whispered then, awkwardly.

He saw out of the corner of his eye how Hannibal bowed his head, acknowledging the apology.

”Do you want some ice cream?” the doctor asked then, motioning his hand to the near booth.

Chapter End Notes

Unfortunately I won't be able to update this fic for a few days, because I won't be home for the weekend, so the next chapter will be updated hopefully on Monday or Tuesday. I'm sorry about this, as I've had so much fun to write this daily. ,__,

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal went to retrieve ice cream for Will, and the boy sat on the bench while he waited. The weather was still very warm, and he felt a bit uncomfortable in his coveralls. He still felt embarrassed wearing them, even though he had tried not to think about them at all. Will liked it better when his mind didn't wander.

Sitting on the bench for a few minutes, a young girl came and sat right next to him, and the boy fidgeted nervously. The girl watched him curiously from head to toe, and Will felt unpleasantly observed.

”Your clothes are tasteless,” the girl stated, while looking smug. Will stared at her shoulder dumbly for a moment.

”It's not like I can choose what to wear,” he said then grumpily, looking hatefully at his coveralls, again acknowledging what he was wearing.

The girl seemed surprised, and soon her expression changed to pity. Will felt strange, talking to a young girl, at least 6-years old. Even though he was now in a younger body, he was still the same age mentally, but the girl didn't know that – she thought that she was talking to a boy, just about the same age. This knowledge didn't make Will feel any better.

All of the sudden the girl clasped her hands together, and Will looked nervously at her knees.

”My name is Sarah, what's yours?” she asked enthusiastically.

”Will,” the boy answered faintly.

She was going to say something else, but didn't get the chance when Hannibal came back and raised one eyebrow at the sight he was seeing. Sarah glanced at him shyly.

”I see you've made a friend while I was away,” Hannibal observed, as he handed the ice cream to Will. It was just like he liked it, and he was confused how the man had known which ice cream to buy. It always seemed that the doctor knew almost everything about him, but he didn't know anything about Hannibal himself.

Will nodded then hesitantly, remembering the doctor's statement. He couldn't say that the girl was his friend – he had talked to her for a minute, and at first she had been rather rude, but he wasn't going to correct Hannibal.

Sarah looked nervous, seeing how awkward the whole situation was, and decided to smile after a while, introducing herself to the doctor.

Will didn't like where this was going, it felt ridiculous. And he definitely didn't want Hannibal to invite the little girl over, so that Will would have 'playmates'. He had been

informing the doctor continuously that he *wasn't* a child.

The empath hid his relief, when Hannibal smiled at Sarah when she mumbled that she should go, because her mother was most likely waiting for her. The girl bid goodbye to Will, trying to hug him, failing thoroughly, and the boy blushed feeling Hannibal's eyes on him.

When the girl disappeared Hannibal sat next to Will and studied him for a while, until his eyes came to rest on his hands.

”Your ice cream is melting, Will,” the doctor pointed out, and the boy snapped his head to the treat, licking the melted ice away.

He savored the flavor, tasting mint and chocolate. It was heavenly, so fresh and sweet, and still cold, even after being in the sunlight. The boy swirled his tongue over the ice cream, never biting it, as the cold ice felt piercing on his teeth.

It took a while to finish the ice cream, but the two sat in the park, and watched as the children played by themselves, having fun and laughed. Will felt safe, having the doctor by his side.

**

A few other kids had tried to get Will to play with them, as they said that he seemed lonely, and it seemed unlikely that his *dad* was going to play with him. Will had been dumbstruck for a while, until he made it clear that he didn't want to participate in any of their games.

The boy had been avoiding other kids after the incident, sulking silently. Hannibal had been amused of course, not taking any offence of being addressed as Will's 'dad', which made the empath even more moody. It was like the doctor was actually trying to become a father figure of sorts, and Will wasn't so sure that he liked this idea – Hannibal had been his colleague, sort of, and a friend.

When they finally abandoned the park, Will was pleased to get out of there, until they spotted a familiar face. The woman walked over to them, and smiled brightly.

”Hannibal! What ever are you doing here?” she asked, her eyes taking in the man before him, her gaze then stopping to Will.

”Oh my God! Who is this cute little man with you?” she asked then, before the doctor even answered to the first question.

Will looked at Alana terrified, thinking of all the ways he could just get out of this situation. He prayed that Hannibal wouldn't tell her anything at all, but it seemed unlikely. He wasn't so sure how she would even react to the news – Will hadn't thought about it too much.

”Good to see you too, Alana,” Hannibal answered instead, smiling lightly.

Alana knelt on the pavement and placed her hands on Will's shoulders, and the empath tensed, avoiding eye contact. The woman cooed and giggled at his shyness.

”What's your name?” Alana inquired, smiling warmly.

Will didn't say a word – he couldn't. He didn't want Alana to know what has happened to him, it was embarrassing. The woman didn't seem to mind, though, thinking that he was so shy that he couldn't speak to strangers. As soon as she got up, she tousled Will's hair, still smiling.

”He's quite shy, isn't he?” she asked then, turning to Hannibal. The doctor looked at Will briefly, and nodded.

”I'm sorry, Alana, but we have to go now,” he said then, indicating that they had a schedule.

”Oh. Oh! I'm so sorry,” she uttered nervously, ”Is he one of your patients?” she whispered then, lowering her voice so that Will wouldn't hear her.

Hannibal smiled briefly and bid goodbye to her, taking Will's hand into his and turned to leave. Will felt distressed, and didn't pay any attention anymore to the fact that they were holding hands, it was becoming a common thing, and it brought the boy out of his head.

The doctor's hand was comforting and warm, and much more bigger than his tiny fists. Will felt safe again. Hannibal hadn't told Alana anything, and he wondered silently: why?

Chapter End Notes

Yep, a wild Alana appears. What do you think is the reason why Hannibal didn't reveal that the kid was Will?
Anyway, I'm here again~ so be prepared for new chapters! I'm trying to write more now that I'm home again.

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

They walked in silence, hand in hand, until they arrived to the doctor's car, which was parked a few blocks away from the park – Dr. Lecter had clearly wanted the park to be a surprise, which it had been. Will still wasn't sure if he liked it, though. The kids had been pushy, and Will loathed strangers who were too physical and tried to touch him.

Seeing Alana had been a huge shock, and Will was still trying to recover from it. He was thankful that she hadn't recognized him, and that Hannibal hadn't told her about him either. Will noticed that he started to rely on the doctor more now, even unconsciously.

A whine got Will's attention, startling him, and the boy turned his head to the left. There, in the middle of the road lay a small puppy. It seemed like the dog was injured, and Will felt his heart jump into his throat, seeing how the puppy couldn't get away from the road, its front paw apparently broken.

Will let go of Hannibal's hand and turned to the road, making his way to the puppy. He knelt by its side, and shushed, trying to appear comforting.

”You're going to be all right. I'll take care of you,” the boy whispered, stroking the puppy's fur.

The dog let out another whimper, and Will tried to move the animal without hurting it, carefully lifting the puppy from the ground into his arms.

The boy had all of his attention on the puppy, so he didn't notice that a car was coming his way, until Dr. Lecter had to raise his voice, warning him. Will turned his head, just in time to see how the car came to a halt, a few inches from him. His heart hammered in his chest, and the empath felt terrified. He wouldn't have had time to dodge the car.

The driver cursed loudly and shouted at Will, calling him names. The boy shook when he got up from his knees, the puppy in his hands. In a second Will felt a warm hand on his shoulder, and when he looked up he saw Hannibal, expressionless.

”Now, Will. Be a good boy and go wait in the car,” he said then.

Will was still shaking when he nodded and made his way to the car, the dog still held gently in his arms. Hannibal waited for the boy to get in the car before he turned to the driver. The man sitting in his car was glaring at him.

”You should watch where that brat of yours is going, I almost ran over him! Haven't you taught that bastard anything?!” the man snapped, looking at Hannibal from his seat with angry eyes.

The doctor pursed his lips, noticing already how hideous this man was. It was obvious that he hated children, it was all over the man's face – and in his speech. Hannibal hid his disgust and pulled his lips into a false smile.

”I'm sorry on his behalf,” Dr. Lecter started, ”but I'm quite certain that you drove over the speed limit.”

”WHAT?”

”You heard me,” the doctor said, ”and I'm proposing you a deal.” The man in the car watched Hannibal warily, confused.

”What is this deal then?” the man asked impatiently, trying to get this conversation to end quickly. Hannibal was pleased that the man wasn't going to question anything, as he seemed to be on a rush.

”I won't inform anyone about this incident, if you don't do that either.”

”Fine, deal,” the driver snarled. Hannibal smiled and let the man go, taking a note of the license plate number.

After the car was gone, the doctor moved to his own car and got inside. Will sat on the passenger seat, the puppy on his lap. The boy was petting it silently and didn't avert his eyes from it even when Hannibal asked if he was okay.

”I- I'm fine,” Will muttered.

Hannibal could see that Will's hands were still shaking a bit from the shock, and when the doctor brought his hand to the boy's head, he tensed for a moment.

”Let's get that puppy treatment,” Dr. Lecter said then soothingly, caressing Will's curls. The boy nodded.

**

The puppy had a broken paw, like Will predicted, and now the dog rested on his lap, sleeping. The dog was a stray, so the empath, of course, wanted to keep it. Hannibal hadn't said anything to that, just accepting that the pack was getting bigger, again.

Will had named the puppy Cleo after he was sure that the dog was in fact stray. It puzzled the doctor that the boy could come up with dog names just like that, like it was no difficult at all.

They drove to Will's house and the boy introduced the newcomer to the others, and Hannibal was amused because Will did it like introducing people to each other. The dogs were happy to get a new friend, even though she was injured, but they were careful with her, while they sniffed and shuffled around Cleo.

Will seemed satisfied when the dogs behaved themselves, and Winston came to greet him with his tail flagging enthusiastically. The boy smiled when he petted his dogs.

Hannibal moved to the kitchen and started to make dinner for them from the groceries he had brought over last time. It was already getting darker outside, as the time flew by so quickly, when they had been in the park. He remembered the little girl who had been so interested in being Will's friend. It was a shame that she hadn't stayed longer.

The empath walked into the kitchen and watched as Dr. Lecter prepared the meal, chopping onions and slicing the meat into equal pieces. The man moved in the kitchen smoothly, and soon he started to cook the meat, making a sauce at the same time in another pot. He minced some basil and added them to the sauce, mixing it.

The meat was cooking nicely on the frying pan, sending a heavenly smell all over the house, and Will felt his mouth to water. He licked his lips briefly, and took a seat on the table, still watching how the doctor flipped the meat over the pan and added more seasoning on it.

Will's dogs tried to get into the kitchen, smelling the food, but Will didn't want them to disturb the doctor so he ushered them out, giving them their own food. He was *not* going to share Dr. Lecter's meal with his dogs. The boy was certain that the doctor wouldn't even approve of that.

”This won't take long anymore,” Hannibal said, getting again Will's attention.

The boy hummed as an answer, and the doctor smiled to himself, as he put the dessert to the oven. They could start with the dinner in a moment.

Will set the dinner table while he waited for the doctor to announce that they could start eating. He was startled when Hannibal's hand came to rest on his shoulder, but was even more baffled when the doctor praised him like one of his dogs.

”Good boy,” he said, while smoothing his hair. Will pouted, but didn't say anything.

**

The meal was perfect as always, and Will savored the meat, letting the taste take over his mouth. After swallowing he licked his lips from the creamy sauce and took another bite into his mouth. The boy felt pampered now that he got to eat Dr. Lecter's meals regularly. It wasn't weird anymore, it was luxury.

The doctor seemed pleased with every forkful he ate, and soon Will noticed that Hannibal had his attention more on him than his own food. The thought made him blush lightly, and he took another bite to chew, fearing that if he wasn't eating he should talk.

Soon Will's plate was empty, and Dr. Lecter raised to retrieve the dished to the sink, preparing the dessert at the same time and taking it to the dinner table. He placed a bowl in front of him and the boy watched as the custard trickled down over the top of the pastry. It looked like a simple apple pie, but Will was sure that it wasn't ordinary at all.

He took a spoonful of the treat into his mouth and his taste buds melted with it. Will let out a faint hum, licking the spoon clean.

”This is delicious,” he declared then, seeing how Hannibal's lips turned up just a bit.

They ate in silence after that, and Will explored the texture of the apples with his tongue before swallowing them. It was definitely the best apple pie he had ever had.

It didn't take Will long to finish the dessert and now he was licking his spoon, trying to get every drop of the custard into his mouth. Hannibal cleared the table after Will was finished and started to wash the dishes, first rolling his shirt sleeves up.

Will helped with drying the dishes again and they worked in silence. The only sound came from the water, as Hannibal rinsed the foam and dish soap away. The silence was comforting and Will didn't feel awkward at all, like sometimes when he was left alone with a stranger in a room and neither didn't know what to say next.

After a while they were done and Will went to let the dogs in again. Cleo was the only one who had stayed indoors, because she couldn't walk, and it rested on a cushion. It seemed like Winston had taken it to his task to help the puppy, and now when Will let the dogs in, Winston shuffled over to Cleo immediately.

The boy shut the door and sighed, he was getting tired now that he had eaten. He noticed that Dr. Lecter had come out of the kitchen and was now pulling his coat on.

”You're going?” Will asked then, looking at the doctor's coat buttons.

”No, dear Will. *We* are going,” he corrected, smiling lightly. Will turned his head to the dogs.

”What about Cleo?” he asked, unsure if it was okay to leave the puppy here. Hannibal followed his gaze and took in the little form of the dog.

”You can take her with you, if that makes you feel more comfortable,” Dr. Lecter suggested, moving to the front door, waiting for Will.

The boy nodded and went to pick Cleo up from the cushion. The puppy whined a bit, but soon quieted down. Will followed Hannibal out of the door the puppy in his arms.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter was pretty much food porn... I got hungry while I wrote it.

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It had taken a couple of minutes for Will to fall asleep now that they were sitting in the car again. Cleo lay on Will's lap, listening to the boy's peaceful breathing. It was obvious that he wasn't having nightmares, as Will's lips formed a small sweet smile, and his whole posture was relaxed as well.

Hannibal had known that once the boy ate he would be tired. It took much more energy to do things now that he was a child, so the boy needed sleep. The doctor also knew that Will hadn't been sleeping much before all of this, because of his nightmares, and he had suffered from a slight insomnia. It was like his body was fixing him slowly now, in this new form, and Hannibal found all of this quite interesting.

The drive went by smoothly without any interruptions. When Hannibal finally parked the car and turned his head to the boy, he noticed that the puppy was also in deep sleep, resting still on the empath's lap, snuggling into the warmth. The doctor sat silently still for a moment, observing Will's peaceful face.

He had seen Will a couple of times horrified because of his nightmares, when he stumbled to his front door, awakened by his sleep walking. Now he couldn't even place that exact expression to the boy's vulnerable face. There was no fear in the air, only contentment and calmness.

The doctor got out of the car and circled to the Will's side, opening the car door. He placed his palm on the boy's shoulder, but the boy didn't stir. Will was in deep sleep, so deep that he was oblivious to his surroundings. Dr. Lecter felt under his palm how the boy breathed, slow and profound. Soon he came to the conclusion that he had no other choice but to carry Will out of the car. The dog was a problem, though.

Hannibal went to retrieve a blanket and returned to the open door. He lifted the puppy carefully with the soft blanket, and disappeared for a moment. Then he came back, and took sleeping Will into his arms, locking the car and walking to the house.

The boy was light, and it was easier to carry Will than Hannibal first predicted. The boy's head was pressed slightly to his chest, and Hannibal could smell the sweetness of him, a light touch of his dogs and the clean scent of Will's own flesh.

The doctor started to climb the stairs, still carrying the sleeping form in his arms, savoring the scents, closer now than ever. He felt the warmth of Will's exhales, even through his three piece suit. He could recognize his relaxed pulse as well, beneath the coveralls Will was still wearing. The picture of him was quite adorable.

Hannibal took the final steps to the guest room, opening the door and taking in the view. After the first night he had changed the sheets, unsure if the room was still needed.

Apparently, it was. He had folded Will's pajamas and placed them in the wardrobe. The doctor thought for a moment how to proceed from here. He didn't want to violate Will's privacy, but the idea of the boy sleeping in the grassy coveralls wasn't very appealing. The bed sheets would be stained afterwards.

Hannibal stood unmoving for a few moments, until he came to the decision – the bed sheets were worth of the sacrifice. He wasn't going to put their relationship put in jeopardy now that they had finally gotten closer – he needed Will's trust.

After making his decision, Hannibal carried Will to the bed, tucking him in with the sheets. The boy sighed unconsciously, sinking into the plush bed. Hannibal leant over him, smoothing his curls and inhaling the sweetness momentarily, until he straightened up and left the room.

**

The blood dripped down Will's face, and the boy watched terrified at his hands – they were stained with red. He couldn't lift himself up for some reason, even though he tried desperately. His legs weren't working, it was as if they were paralyzed.

Will lifted his head more, trying to see better. It was dark everywhere, and he could only hear his own ragged breathing and feel how the warm blood trickled and stained his clothes. The warm blood soon turned cold, and Will shivered. His eyes started to get used to the darkness, and shortly he was able to see what was the cause of this all.

His eyes widened with dread and he was starting to feel sick now that he saw properly. He still couldn't lift himself up entirely, but that wasn't such a big surprise now that he knew the situation. Will used his elbows and arms to lean backwards, as he fought with the now rising pain and fear. His eyes stung with hot tears of pain.

There, by his side lay Cleo, or what was left of her, as she was bloodied and deformed. Will wanted to scream, but no sound came out of his mouth. It got stuck in his throat, and he could only force himself to breathe, trying to fight off the tears.

What was even more terrifying was that he was able to see himself wholly now. Will came to realize that he *had no legs*. There was absolutely nothing – just blood and his torso, lying on a pile of his own intestines. He was shaken that he was even alive anymore.

That was when he heard a voice.

”You fucking bastard!”

Will was startled and he ground his teeth together with the pain. He was feeling burning pain, and the blood was now sticky and cold, clinging to him. He saw a figure getting out of a what? There were shadows everywhere. The figure cursed loudly and started to get closer. Will recognized the car.

”You piece of shit! I'm going to kill you!”

The figure took a hold of something heavy, lifting it up, swinging it and laughing while looking down at Will. The boy had no place to hide to. He couldn't even move, not without his legs.

There, lying on his own blood and guts, Will knew that this man was going to kill him. He knew it – he could sense it. This man had first ran over Cleo, killing the puppy, and then gotten the feel of it, feel of the killing. He had maimed Will's legs, taking them with him, and now he was going to finish this all.

There would be nothing left behind. Just a stain of blood.

Will could see the man now, right in front of him, smiling cruelly at him. He shivered with fear.

”Don't worry, you can join your precious doggy in Hell.”

He lifted his metal pipe and Will screamed. He was able to use his voice again, and he screamed.

**

Will woke up, gasping for air. He was sticky with sweat, and the sheets were tangled on his legs. His heart was thudding in his chest, and Will felt still terrified. He didn't have any nightmares for days, so having one now was totally unexpected. He had started to believe that he could live without them because of his state, but apparently it wasn't that easy.

The boy lifted the sheets and sat on the edge of the bed. He shivered, still in shock. Will noticed that he was in the guest room, and that he still had his day old clothes on. He felt relieved momentarily, but decided then to change.

He found the pajamas he had worn before, and slipped into them, firstly wiping off the sweat and then washing his face. Will could still see the blood on his hands, smell the bitter and copper scent of it. He fidgeted as the nightmare came into his mind again, killing the silence with whispered curses.

The boy turned his head to the alarm clock and he saw that it was only two in the morning. Then he remembered Cleo. Will searched the whole room but couldn't find the puppy. His heart started to hammer in his chest. Had the puppy been just another dream – another hallucination?

Will walked to the door and turned the handle, leaving the door ajar, and finding his way shortly to Dr. Lecter's bedroom door. He was skittish, still the blood in his mind, when he knocked faintly on the door.

It took only a few seconds for Hannibal to open the door. He looked at Will, a brief concern changing his features momentarily. He noticed immediately that Will had changed to the silk pajamas, and that the boy was scared – he reeked of fear.

”Dr. - Dr. Le- Lecter...” Will stammered, his eyes locked on his own hands.

Hannibal gave room for Will to enter the bedroom, and the boy took hesitant steps, stopping right in front of the man. The doctor placed his hand on the boy's head, soothing him.

”I presume you had a nightmare,” Hannibal stated, and saw how Will relaxed a bit when he heard his reassuring voice. The boy nodded.

”Do you want to talk about it?” the doctor asked, already ready to be rejected.

He was pleasantly surprised, when the boy nodded instead, and made his way to the bed, sitting on the edge of it. Hannibal sat next to him, leaving a small gap between them. He didn't want to seem pressing, not when he didn't have any idea what the dream had been about.

Will started with a faint whisper, trying to find his voice again. He started with the blood, and told the doctor how he had noticed Cleo. He had to stop for a moment to take deep breaths, and Hannibal rubbed at his back. The doctor felt shivers, when Will began again, this time telling about himself, about the man. Hannibal soothed the boy, when he started to sob afterwards. Will was a mess, and it was no wonder. He came face to face with a near death experience.

Will sobbed into Hannibal's chest, and the doctor started to pet his curly brown hair. The boy sniffed and then his sobbing subdued. The warm hand on his head was reassuring, and he could smell Hannibal, the man's aftershave and wine. Will liked the smell of him.

”You should sleep, dear Will,” Dr. Lecter said softly, and Will bowed his head.

The boy turned his head so he could look at the man shortly. He liked the darkness they were in, it wasn't scary like in his dream.

”Uh... I don't think.. would you mind-?” Will stammered, embarrassed he couldn't find the right words.

”It's perfectly fine, Will. I doubt you could sleep restfully without a reassurance that you're not alone,” Dr. Lecter answered, getting up and tucking Will up once again.

The boy seemed to be drowsy now that the fear had left him. Will took note of Hannibal taking the other side of the bed, but after that he was already in deep sleep.

Dr. Lecter watched the boy for a moment, letting his hand smooth the curly hair from his forehead. He slid his index finger down his now silky smooth cheeks. Will was such an exquisite creature. And he hated to see someone else harm him.

Hannibal felt furious to the man. He boiled inside with hatred, and he could already smell and taste the copper of the man's blood on his tongue.

Chapter End Notes

I have to say that this chapter came out more gory than I first intended... well, everything can't always be sparkles and rainbows.
+ *Will having nightmares and curling up in Hannibal's bed to sleep with him.* ✓ Kind of. :D

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal knew that after having a nightmare after a long time, Will was more likely going to sleep late because of his fragile state. It gave the man a perfect opportunity, and he wasn't going to waste it. He lay beside the sleeping boy for fifteen minutes, watching him quietly, until he got up and changed to one of his suits, making as little noise as possible.

He had noticed that Will was a heavy sleeper, now that he was a child, so it was not a problem to move in the room. When he was finished changing, Dr. Lecter left the bedroom, closing the door behind him and taking the last glance of the sleeping form of brown curls.

The doctor climbed downstairs making his way to the basement, walking down the dark hallway. He didn't feel like turning on the lights, as he saw perfectly well in the darkness, and the lights might have distracted the neighbours. The man enjoyed the silence and how the only sound he could hear was his own breathing and his light steps.

It didn't take long to retrieve the supplies that he knew he was going to need, and walk out of the house to his waiting car. Hannibal was grateful that he had took note of the car's license plate. Afterwards, when Will had been sleeping, the doctor made a few phone calls and gotten an address. It was child's play.

When Hannibal started the car, his lips were formed into a smile. A cruel one.

**

The man's house was located in an isolated area, it was basically almost countryside. There were no neighbours to be worried about, and the whole sight was a perfect opportunity for a murder. It was a wonder that no one else had thought about it earlier, but then again most people weren't predators looking for their victims. He was sure that no one would miss this man, once he was gone. After taking care of the driver's home address it had been easy to find out that the man had no family, no relatives – nobody at all. Maybe that was the reason why the man was so uncivilized.

Hannibal parked his car behind a tall hedgerow, where it would be impossible to notice, especially now that it was so dark outside. The half moon peeked momentarily from the dark clouds, when the doctor took his suitcase with him and made his way to the house. It was obvious that his victim didn't take care of his surroundings – the yard was a mess, it flowered with weeds, rusty buckets and pipes, and other rubbish Hannibal didn't feel like observing from closer. The filthiness of this place made the doctor feel repulsed.

It came to the light that the front door was easy to pick open, and the doctor started to feel disappointed how effortless all of this was. However, he didn't let his guard down, as he had done that mistake once, afterwards feeling ashamed by his carelessness. If getting into the

house was this simple, he wasn't going to make it easy to the man. He hadn't even thought of letting the man out of this so easily. He definitely deserved to suffer.

Hannibal walked into the dark house and stopped still, listening for any sounds nearby. He couldn't hear anything though, so he made his way silently to the presumed bedroom. The house was decorated with aged furniture, now stained and dusty, as the man didn't care for cleanliness. It also seemed like the man hadn't felt the desire to redecorate the house, when he had moved in, keeping the old furniture and the cracked wallpaper. Hannibal watched the sight with distaste.

When he came in front of the bedroom, he noticed that the door was ajar, and he opened it with his clothed hand, trying to avoid a creak, as the whole house seemed old and cranky. His eyes flickered up to the man, who was sleeping in his bed on his back, snoring lightly. The doctor sneered. He was going to enjoy this.

He approached his victim carefully, not making a sound, leaving his suitcase propped up against the wall. Soon he was standing beside the oblivious man, and he watched how his breathes rose and fell, rhythmically. The whole room reeked of liquor, unwashed clothes and mold, and Hannibal was pleased to get to paint the room with the smell of this man's blood.

As soon as the doctor pressed his palms on his victim's throat and started to squeeze, the man's eyes snapped open, staring at his assaulter. The man tried to struggle, but all of it was in vain, since Hannibal's grip was strong. Black spots started to form in his view, as oxygen started to leave his lungs. The burning sensation got stronger, as his brain couldn't get his lungs to breathe.

It didn't take long for the doctor to get the man unconscious. He wasn't going to kill this man with only strangulation, it wouldn't be enough – not nearly enough for what this pig had done to Will, sweet vulnerable Will, who had been scared to death. Hannibal hadn't seen him so terrified for a long time, and this man was going to pay for that.

While the man lay unconscious on the bed, the doctor retrieved his suitcase and placed his supplies on the nearby table. After that he took hold of the rope that he had been carrying inside the case, and started to tie the man's hands up and then onto the headboard of the bed. Having done that, he moved to the legs, binding them together and then to the bed – he didn't want his victim to squirm too much. Last but not least, he stuffed a cloth into the man's mouth, just in case.

Hannibal had found the time to polish his bow saw and knives, when the man came to his senses. He fretted and searched the room with his eyes, until they found Dr. Lecter, standing beside him and the table he had placed his supplies. He tried to speak, but soon found out that he couldn't because of the gag. The doctor smirked down at him.

“What a great pleasure to have you with us again, Mr. Boivin,” Hannibal said, watching how the man's eyes grew frantically bigger.

It seemed that Mr. Boivin didn't recognize the doctor, which he noticed immediately with a frown. This man was shockingly rude.

Hannibal felt that he had waited enough, and noted that he was having a schedule to maintain. Even though Will would sleep late, this was going to take some time, and he had to make sure not to leave any evidence behind. He shouldn't let himself slip.

With this though on his mind, the doctor selected a surgeon's knife from the table and leaned closer to his victim's upper body. Mr. Boivin gritted his teeth together around the cloth, when the blade made contact with his skin. Hannibal started with shallow cuts, which stung the man, and made his way then to his sides, sinking the blade thoroughly into the flesh, making the man scream around the gag. He handled the knife with artistry, drawing warm blood, letting it stain the sheets below his victim, until he changed his instrument.

The room echoed with the cracked howls and screams of the man, and Hannibal felt good. He felt truly good, getting to slice this man up, who had hurt Will so deeply. He smelled the sweet, copper blood in the air, with his victim's terror and upcoming death. It was truly exquisite, and he wanted to savor this feeling as long as possible.

Mr. Boivin was in agony, when chunks of his flesh was carved out, leaving his ribs exposed. Hannibal was secretly pleased how the man was still conscious, as he had lost already so much blood. He had already screamed his throat sore, and it had been aching already before all of the screaming, because of Hannibal's strangling before.

The pleasant smirk died on the doctor's face, when the man finally blacked out, and the doctor pressed his hand on Mr. Boivin's throat, crushing his windpipe. He wasn't going to need that anymore.

The doctor watched at the man before him for a while, admiring his piece of work. Then he selected his used supplies, cleaned them with a clean piece of cloth, and placed them back into his suitcase. He checked that he hadn't left anything relevant behind, when he made his way out of the house.

When Dr. Lecter drove back home, he was already in a better mood.

**

Will was still sleeping, as Hannibal predicted, when the man returned. The first thing Dr. Lecter did was to make his way to the kitchen, unloading the fresh meat from his cooler, packing it and placing it into the refrigerator. His storage was full again now.

After popping in the kitchen he checked on Cleo, who was still sleeping as well. He had left the puppy in the bathroom – not to get dog hair everywhere, and if it happened to have an accident, it wouldn't be so troublesome to clean up. Hannibal hoped that Will wouldn't want to keep the dog in his house, it would be unfortunate.

It was already five in the morning, so the doctor didn't feel like going back to sleep. He was an early riser anyway, and he didn't often even sleep that much, so he retrieved another three piece suit from his wardrobe and made his way to the second bathroom. He took a short shower, cleaning the smell of blood off of him and changed into the maroon suit.

He passed his time with reading psychology books, having quiet classical music as a background noise, sipping coffee now and then. He had finished half of one of the thick book, when he glanced at the clock and decided that it was time to prepare breakfast.

**

The dogs shuffled around him happily, as Will ran at the beach. He remembered that he had been here before, when he was still younger – with his dad. They had had a picnic, and they had eaten plain sandwiches and watched the sea. Will's dad had told him stories, but he couldn't recall them at the moment.

Will fell when he tripped over one of his dogs. Sand got everywhere, and Will laughed, when the dogs stopped running and watched at him dumbly why the boy had stopped. Winston was the first one to come beside him, and Will hugged at the dog, now happy that the dog was bigger, so he could bury himself properly into his fur.

Cleo's paw was healed now, as the dog approached Will, jumping on his lap. Soon all of his dogs were surrounding him, and Will felt comfortable in their embrace. Winston's fur smelt like bacon and it didn't seem strange at all, until the boy noticed that all of his dogs smelled like food.

Will was awoken to the faint smell of his dream, and he sighed when he understood that it was Hannibal cooking in kitchen, preparing breakfast. He turned slightly in the bed, taking in the surroundings of the room, noticing that this wasn't his so called room. Will swallowed nervously, recalling the night's events, then remembering how he had come to Hannibal's room, seeking safety.

He felt instantly embarrassed, and hoped that the doctor wouldn't broach the subject, but realized then that it was unlikely to happen. Dr. Lecter wanted to know for sure how he felt now, after his nightmare and the terror he had felt.

Will pulled the covers off of him, and sat on the edge of the bed for a few minutes, until he got up and changed. Hannibal had left him clothes again. This time they were bearable at least, Will mused as he watched his reflection from the mirror. He was wearing another pair of jeans and a simple t-shirt. This time dog-free. He wondered absently how many outfits the doctor had purchased for him, when he walked downstairs.

As he got closer to the kitchen, the smell of fried bacon met him. Hannibal smiled lightly when he saw Will entering the room and taking a seat on the table. He handed the boy shortly a plate of bacon with vegetables and bread, and a glass of orange juice. Will thanked him and took a bite, chewing and smiling at the good taste. He felt like he was eating one of his dad's breakfasts, only tenfold better.

Hannibal watched, pleased, as Will chewed on the bacon, commenting on how good the meat was. It was a good thing there was more of it, he mused when he took his own bite of the breakfast. Will's smiling face greeted him from across the table, and they sat in silence while savoring the flavor of Mr. Boivin.

Chapter End Notes

I have to say that this is the first time I've written something like this...
I haven't ever written any gory or horror stuff, because I've thought that it wouldn't be my cup of tea, but oh how wrong I was. This fandom has totally ruined me. :D

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will licked his thumb clean of the bacon fat and turned his head towards the doctor, sensing his glance. Hannibal was looking at him with a pleasant smile tugging at his lips, and then the doctor got up and cleared the table, turning his back to the boy as he made his way to the kitchen. The boy followed him shortly, not wanting to be left on his own.

“When was the last time you bathed, Will?” the doctor asked, and Will blinked out of confusion, the question catching him off guard.

He averted his gaze from Dr. Lecter, when he answered with a faint shrug. He could see out of the corner of his eye how the man's lips were pulled into a line. Not good, then. It was no wonder that the doctor had asked the question though, now that Will remembered again his nightmare, and how he had woken up to find himself damp with sweat.

Will turned to look at Hannibal momentarily, taking the last plate to wipe dry.

“Maybe I should take one now, then,” he mused, as he placed the now dry plate on the kitchen countertop.

Hannibal looked at him, and replied then with: “Very well,” wiping the countertop and disappearing out of the kitchen.

The boy took a seat and waited while the doctor was preparing the bath. His mind was on this upcoming day and his dogs – he really wanted to see them again, even though he had been with them last night. It was impossible for him to be separated from them for long, and he was sure that Hannibal knew that. He wouldn't take the dogs away from him.

Suddenly Will recalled that he had brought Cleo back from his house with him, and he rose up abruptly. Where was the puppy? He hadn't seen her at all after he had fallen asleep, and she hadn't been in his room either. Panic gnawed at him, and he rushed out of the kitchen, calling for the puppy. Then he cursed inwardly, because he realized that she couldn't come for him, since her paw was still healing.

Will made his way to the nearest bathroom, hearing the water humming, as it filled the bathtub. When the boy opened the door, he saw Hannibal kneeling on the floor, feeding Cleo. His breathing stilled for a moment, out of relief. Then he knelt as well, and started to pet the dog, who seemed happy to see Will again. Cleo snuffled and licked at his fingertips, still seemingly coated with the flavor of the bacon.

The doctor rose up and smiled at the sight. Will himself was just as cute as the puppy, he mused as he unrolled his shirt sleeves down.

“Your bath is ready now, Will,” he stated then, and turned to leave, but felt a hand taking a hold of his pant leg.

Hannibal looked at Will, who seemed embarrassed, his head turned to the opposite direction of him. Cleo had taken a place under the sink, and observed the situation silently, her big brown eyes shining from the shadows.

“What is it, Will?” the doctor inquired, already guessing what the boy wanted.

Will's ears burned red, as he was already ashamed of his request, but he noted that he had no other choice, but to ask for the good doctor's help. He was too scared, and when he glanced at the bathtub, his arms broke in goosebumps. The tub was enormous, even bigger than his own. He hadn't even thought about the whole tub before he had stepped into the room, but now it was the only thing he saw.

He broke his gaze from it, and looked at Dr. Lecter's pant leg he had grabbed, then letting go of it. The doctor was still waiting for his answer, but Will *knew* that Hannibal knew, and it made him feel annoyed.

It wasn't like this was the first time though, he mused, trying to coax himself to answer to the question. It wasn't so bad the last time. Actually, it was quite comfortable.

Will stared the floor, when he faintly gave his plea. The doctor was amused as he nodded, and Will hated momentarily how he already felt safe, until he was in the bath and relaxed under Dr. Lecter's hands on his scalp.

**

Will was changing into his clothes in the bathroom, when the phone rang. Hannibal made his way to the phone and answered it after a few rings. His expressions soured immediately, when he recognized the voice at the other end of the call.

“How is Will?” the man asked, his voice already annoyed. Hannibal wanted to sigh, but suppressed it. Why couldn't he leave Will alone just for a few days?

“Not still well, I'm afraid,” the doctor answered smoothly. He could hear the cussing at the other end.

“It's been days!”

“Jack, I'll let you know when he's better,” Dr. Lecter said, trying to appear reassuring. The man didn't buy it.

“Dr. Lecter, we need him here, and you know that. Can you get him on to the phone?”

“No, he's having a bath.”

“Well, he better phone me then when he's finished. We've had another body and I'd like to have his opinion, sick or not,” Jack finished, ending the call.

Will emerged from the bathroom when the call ended, wearing the same clothes he had been wearing before. He carried Cleo, hugging her lightly into his chest, and Dr. Lecter turned his head to the sight, admiring now the cleanliness of the boy before his eyes. Will's hair was ruffled after the drying, and his clothes clung to him a bit because of the bath's steam.

Will eyed the phone, and turned his gaze to Hannibal's momentarily, shifting his eyes then to rest on the doctor's left shoulder.

“Who was it?” he asked hesitantly.

“It was Jack, asking for your welfare,” Dr. Lecter responded, and noticed how the boy stiffened, “I didn't tell him anything,” he added soothingly.

Will sighed and nodded while petting Cleo. He walked slowly to the living room and settled into a couch, lowering the puppy on his lap. The dog whined a bit when he stopped petting her, but when his hand found the fur again she nuzzled into him.

Hannibal settled beside him, watching the boy stroking the puppy fondly, and felt a bang of affection towards him, which startled him slightly. He had known that he was fond of Will, but this was something else entirely, and it caught him unaware. Will smiled at the dog and made noises, which got the dog to respond to him. It seemed like the puppy's paw was healing quickly, as she tried to give her paw for Will to hold. The boy laughed, and scratched Cleo behind her ears.

“What are we doing today?” the boy inquired then, sparing a glance to the doctor. Hannibal smiled slightly.

“I was hoping that you would come up with something,” he said then, seeing how Will's eyes started to sparkle with enthusiasm. The doctor waited patiently, until Will shared his idea out loud.

“I wanted to go to fishing!” he announced then, and Hannibal felt already that this wasn't a good idea.

“Fishing?”

“Yes! I haven't done that for a long time now... I kind of miss it already,” Will said, looking hazily at Cleo's fur.

Hannibal sat silently for a few seconds, until he agreed to the boy's idea. He couldn't say that he was waiting for it, though.

**

They drove to Will's house, and the boy was pleased that the weather was perfect for fishing, when they got out of the car, and breathed in the crisp morning air. It had rained a little bit over the night, it seemed, as the grass was still damp, and the smell of it was strong on their noses.

The dogs were already awake, as always, when Will opened the front door and was welcomed inside by his them. He walked into the living room and placed Cleo on a pillow she had been yesterday. The puppy was reluctant to leave Will's arms, as he was warm, but soon calmed down when other dogs came to welcome her back as well.

Winston's tail flagged as the dog nuzzled his face into Will's jeans. Will knelt and hugged the dog, smiling brightly.

Hannibal watched from afar, and noted that Will was feeling more cheerful than before. He smiled almost all the time, now that he was a child. Now that he thought about it, he hadn't seen the boy's grimaces lately. He was more joyful, more alive. The sight was a nice change from the frightened, insomniac Will.

The doctor was pulled from his thoughts when Will turned to face him with a request, apparently.

“Can we take the dogs there as well?” the boy asked. Dr. Lecter hesitated momentarily, and seeing that Will pouted a bit.

Hannibal was dumbstruck as he saw Will's expression. His eyes were round, sparkling blue, and his lips were turned into a cute pout. There was no way he could refuse, and when he gave his statement, Will smiled gratefully.

**

“Um.. Dr. Lecter?” Will inquired, looking at the man's three piece suit warily.

“Yes, Will?” Hannibal responded, catching his gaze. The doctor lifted an eyebrow, curious.

Will looked a bit uncomfortable, not knowing if it was wise to point it out to the man, but it seemed rude not to. He didn't want the doctor to get annoyed afterwards.

“You should change...” he started nervously, “I don't think your clothes are proper for fishing,” Will finished with a sigh. Hannibal looked at the boy confused.

“I don't see any problem with what I'm wearing right now.”

The boy felt a tugging sensation as a laugh tried to coax itself free, but he got it under control. He wasn't going to laugh. He couldn't. It would be rude towards the man.

“Haven't you ever been fishing? Your clothes will get ruined, if you go like that... I'll lend you some of mine.”

Will disappeared into his bedroom, and Hannibal felt tense. Will's clothes were full of dog hair. They were shabby and out of fashion. And he was supposed to wear them? The whole idea was distasteful.

He couldn't mull over his thoughts any longer though, when Will emerged from his room and handed clothes to him. Hannibal eyed them critically. He was holding a pair of jeans (he never wore jeans) and a worn dress shirt. Will saw his face and smiled.

“It's not like you have to wear them after this... it's only this one time,” he reassured.

The doctor didn't reply, as he made his way to the bathroom to change. Will thought that all of this was quite hilarious, and he couldn't stop smiling when Dr. Lecter emerged, looking so much different. The jeans were snug, and the shirt just tight enough. It was a good thing that Will wasn't very much smaller of the man, *hadn't been*, or the button's wouldn't have kept the shirt closed.

“Are you satisfied now?” Hannibal asked then, seemingly a bit uncomfortable in his new clothes.

Will nodded, and turned to his dogs, taking them out with him, and then retrieving his rod and line. The doctor followed behind, carrying a basket full of food with him.

Chapter End Notes

I want to thank my lovely friend for giving me the idea for fishing. :'D ♥
And ofc I couldn't miss out the chance to mess with Hannibal as well...

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I'm not allowing your dogs in my car, Will,” Hannibal started as they walked towards the road.

Will glanced at him amused, swinging his rod while walking ahead of Dr. Lecter, his dogs right behind him.

“We don't need you car, Dr. Lecter. The place is nearby,” he smiled then, seeing how the man relaxed. It was obvious that he didn't want dog fur on his car seats. Or muddy paw prints.

The doctor watched as Will skipped enthusiastically, almost tripping on his dogs, as they swarmed around his legs. They were walking on a small path, which went through a meadow full of hay. Hannibal felt now relieved that he had changed, it would've been awful if his clothes had been stained and full of straws.

A nice, light breeze played with their hair, as they made their way to the shore. There was a lean landing stage, and Will walked over to it immediately. The sand was rough, full of small rocks, and the shore was surrounded with small trees. It was a pleasant and quiet place, and it seemed like there hadn't been other visitors for a long time. It was Will's secret place, obviously his fishing spot.

Hannibal placed his basket on a flat rock and started to observe his surroundings. He saw from the corner of his eye how Will started to get ready for fishing. He himself wasn't interested in such an act, but he kept his eyes for a moment on the rod, as Will prepared it expectedly. He attached the lure, and the doctor saw how his small hands were cautious not to go near the sharp hook.

A vivid image came to his mind, the hook piercing smooth skin, leaving blood to run down from the raw holes. Red, flowing blood, coppery like Mr. Boivin's. Staining the clothes, leaving them soaked with its taste.

The image vanished as Hannibal blinked, and now he was staring at Will's back. He had already started, it seemed. There was a bucket placed right next to Will's legs, full of water. It was for the fish he was going to catch.

The dogs were resting near the boy, all except Winston, who was with Will, trying to spot fish, which swam restlessly below the landing stage.

Hannibal sat on a rock, near to his basket. He had brought a blanket with him, but he saw no opportunity to use it, as the ground was full of rocks. There was no grass at all, only water plants.

The time went by smoothly, and it took a while for Will to catch his first fish. Winston shuffled enthusiastically, flagging his tail, but not barking. The dog knew not to disturb the peace, as it was the trick to get fish. Suddenly, Winston stumbled over a rock and knocked the bucket over, freeing the first catch. As Will was trying to prevent the bucket from falling into the water, he himself went over the edge, taking his rod with him.

A loud splash could be heard, and Dr. Lecter turned his head where the sound had came from, then realizing what had happened. Will's dogs were whining as he got to the landing stage, and he shooed them away.

Will surfaced, but was still so shocked because of the turn of events that it took him a moment to get out of the water. He was soaked when the doctor helped him up, and Will shivered as the wind blew over him.

Dr. Lecter removed his jacket and draped it around the boy. Will clinged to it and the warmth overtook him. His shivering subdued when Hannibal closed his arms around him. This was their first proper hug, Will mused while taking advantage of the warm body pressed to him.

They stood silent, until the moment when Winston came to nuzzle Will's soaked jeans, whining as an apology. Will shushed the dog and petted him, when Hannibal let him free again. He missed the warmth at once, but said nothing to acknowledge it.

A bit later they got the rod out of the water and Will decided that he had enough of fishing for today. Hannibal nodded and started to prepare lunch for them, and soon they sat closely on flat rocks, eating plain meat sandwiches, for a change – perfect for outdoors and picnics. Will wore still the doctor's jacket, and tried to get his clothes below dry, taking advantage of the wind.

Their peace was disturbed, when they heard a familiar voice calling out: “Dr. Lecter?”

Will stiffened and was stunned to silence. He had hoped that this day wouldn't ever come. Jack was standing over the path, looking distressed, and tired. It was clear that he hadn't slept properly for a few nights, and Will felt responsible for that. He hadn't been to work for at least three days now, and it was obvious from the way Jack looked that they were struggling with a new case.

“Jack. What a surprise, whatever are you doing here?” Hannibal broke the silence, standing up from the rock.

“I'd like to ask the same from you, Dr. Lecter. I'm here to see Will. He wasn't home, not even his dogs were there, and I haven't seen him for days. So, where is he?” Jack asked, annoyed. His eyes shifted to where Will was standing, making him more nervous.

“Who's that?”

“That's Will, I'm afraid,” Hannibal responded after a while. It wasn't like he could have kept this from Jack any longer.

“Are you shitting me?” the man inquired, raising his voice. Hannibal grimaced inwardly to the language Jack was using.

Jack didn't seem too interested in Dr. Lecter's answer, as he made his way to Will, looking down to him, skeptically.

“Will?”

The boy fidgeted, but nodded then once. He wanted the earth to swallow him, right about now. It had been bad enough to see Alana, but she hadn't known that the brown haired seven-year-old was Will. This was far worse.

“What the hell has happened to you, Will?” Jack asked, looking at him dumbfounded.

“...I don't know,” Will answered hesitantly, seeing how his voice affected his boss. Jack's eyes were enormous momentarily, until he squinted at him. Jack turned to Hannibal, looking annoyed.

“Is this what you meant by that '*Will is sick, and unable to work*'?”

Hannibal was about to answer, but was sileced by Jack, as the man raised his voice again.

“Have you actually taken him to a doctor?”

Will was the first to answer to that, as he looked irritated now. Jack had no right to talk to the good doctor like that, as Hannibal had helped him since all of this happened. He had been happier for the first time after a long time, and now Jack came to ruin everything. He was sure that the man would try to coax him to go and see the new crime scenes, only to make him feel awful again. He didn't want that.

“I haven't seen a doctor, as I haven't wanted to,” Will stated, looking at Jack, who now turned his gaze at him.

“You can't work like that, Will. We need you at the scenes, and we need to get you back.”

Jack's gaze was piercing him, but Will didn't say anything at all. Now that he was smaller, it was even more obvious how intimidating Jack was, angry Jack anyway. He liked that stare even less now that he saw it from another perspective.

Dr. Lecter observed the situation interested, until he saw how distressed Will was becoming. It was clear that he didn't like where all of this was going, and Hannibal was more than pleased to stand for him.

He walked over to them and stopped beside Will, earning a glance from Jack. He noticed immediately how Will relaxed, with only being near him. The progress was fast.

Jack was still staring at Will, when he spoke, the man's eyes snapping up at being adressed.

“Jack, I'll reassure you that Will is going to be all right,” Hannibal said, his voice calm.

“Yes, but we need him at work.”

“Will won't be able to work, as I've already stated. His mind isn't ready for that.”

“What do you mean? Are you implying that making him see stuff, I've broken his mind, making him a kid?!”

“Not at all. Jack, I'll inform you when he's able to work again.”

Jack glanced at Will again, seeing his big round eyes, a small fire in them. He shifted his eyes then to Dr. Lecter and nodded once, turning to leave. This was so weird, he thought.

**

They had left the dogs to Will's after feeding them, and now Will lay on a couch at Dr. Lecter's living room. He had been quite silent after the encounter with Jack, but it was to be expected. Hannibal had known that Jack would make an appearance sometime after the phone call – he had sounded very displeased.

The living room was cozy with its warm atmosphere, and Will listened to the tender music playing from the speakers. Hannibal had taken the time to change into his new three piece suit, and was now reading a book whilst drinking wine. Will had been ushered to change as well, as his clothes were still quite damp. He was wearing once again another outfit, this time with dog prints. The clothes made him feel childish, and he was wondering if it was one of Dr. Lecter's motives – to make him feel naive. It was ridiculous, but it was working, at least a bit.

His thoughts were interrupted, when the phone rang. Hannibal made his way to the phone, answering it. Will could hear faintly how the doctor spoke for a moment, until he came back to the living room. His face was more pale than usual, but otherwise the man seemed just as collected as always, Will noted.

“Who was it?” he asked then, curious.

Dr. Lecter was silent, as he sunk into his armchair. He took a sip from his wine, and looked at the color of it – blood red. His eyes strayed to Will, then.

“It was Alana, she's coming over,” he answered finally, making Will turn as white as a ghost.

Chapter End Notes

I have to say that I've been waiting for this.
And sorry for not updating every day, but you know.. there's also other stuff I have to do.

Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal started to prepare dinner almost instantly after the phone call, probably because he thought that inviting someone over with no dinner was impolite, or possibly he just wanted to do something to get his mind out of the matter. In any case, Will felt terrified, and he couldn't just sit around. He paced back and forth, restlessly, trying to come up with a plan.

He couldn't believe that his luck was this bad. First it had been Jack, and now, right after, Alana. Will was sure that no lie could trick her, and there was a high possibility that she was going to be mad. They had seen her earlier and hadn't said anything, so it was only wise to think about the worst possible scenario, even though it made Will distressed.

While Will was panicking in the dining room, Hannibal moved smoothly around the kitchen, mixing ingredients and measuring spices. It wasn't long until Alana would appear, and the meal would be ready by then.

Dr. Lecter hoped that Alana would understand the situation after discussing it and wouldn't try anything harsh.

**

It was wishful thinking.

Alana arrived just as Hannibal had finished with the dessert and placed it in the refrigerator. She walked straight away to the kitchen, which Hannibal took as a bad sign. He knew that Alana was aware of the fact that the kitchen was one of the sacred places in his house, so giving a lecture would be the most effective in there.

He followed the woman into the kitchen, and stopped in the doorway. Alana turned to him and her expression was dark. Her lips were pulled into a straight line, and her eyes shone with frustration. It was obvious that she was displeased, but Hannibal wasn't sorry at all.

“Jack called me,” Alana started, crossing her arms.

“I was expecting that,” Hannibal responded, mentally frowning at Jack. The man couldn't keep his mouth shut when something was interfering with his work.

Alana pointed a look at him.

“Why didn't you tell me? I thought you trusted me, Hannibal,” she stated, disappointed at how things had turned up.

“I trust you, Alana, but it was Will's wish not to tell anyone.”

Alana sighed and let her arms fall from her chest. She seemed to be struggling with what to say, and it was no wonder, as the whole situation was rather absurd. Hannibal himself had of course already come to terms with it, since he had spent time with Will quite a lot these days.

“Will is all right,” he said then, hoping that he could turn this conversation to his desired direction. It didn't work.

“I don't know, Hannibal. It must've been a big shock, a traumatic event like that isn't easy to deal with.”

“He has dealt with it fairly well.”

“I don't think that isolation is helping him at all. He needs to go out, see people,” Alana insisted.

Hannibal raised a brow at her. This wasn't going to be good.

“What are you suggesting then?” he asked, seeing how Alana's posture changed.

“We both know that you have your patients to tend to, and that they take most of your time. I can help, as I don't have so many of my own.”

“We have to talk to Will about that,” Hannibal said as he made his way to the cabinet, “Would you care to help me set the table?” he added then, taking out silverware and glasses.

Alana nodded and went to the dining room to place the china on the table. She didn't notice a lump of brown hair before she looked down, seeing a small form balled up under the table. Alana's breath caught in her throat, until she realized that it was Will.

She knelt alongside him and looked. The same small boy that she had seen with Hannibal earlier, the same shy boy was Will. And she had cooed at him. Alana blushed, embarrassed at herself.

Will didn't even seem to notice that someone was beside him, as he shook and whimpered slightly. He was all but all right, Alana decided as she watched him. She wanted to help him, to find a way to get this mess cleared, and she was determined to try.

“Will?” she whispered.

The boy froze and his head snapped up, but seeing Alana's face made him hide his own again. She was here. Alana was here. *Right beside him.* Why had Dr. Lecter let her inside? They had talked for sure. She knew. *She knew*, and there was nothing Will could do anymore to hide, but to ball up and not look.

Alana noted how Will started to hyperventilate, and she shushed at him, whispering comforting words. It didn't seem to work, and the woman was too afraid to touch Will, dreading that a touch could trigger him more.

She was saved, however, when Hannibal came to the room, carrying a bottle of red wine. He stopped immediately seeing the scene right in front of him. Will, balled up, apparently having

a panic attack with a helpless Alana by his side. It had been a while since Will had an attack, and it was quite clear that all of it was to blame Jack, who had interfered. And just when things had started to go smoothly.

Hannibal left the bottle on the dining table and knelt in front of Will, giving Alana a look, who straightened herself up. She let him handle this, as she knew that Will trusted Dr. Lecter, he had chose him over her for appointments.

Alana watched as Hannibal placed his hands on Will's shoulders, soothingly calling his name. Will's tense posture changed little by little, and his breathing steadied. When Hannibal was letting go of him, Will grabbed one of his hands, taking a hold of it. His tiny hands were shaking, as was the boy himself. Hannibal smiled reassuringly.

“Will,” he started, voice soft, “why don't you come out from under the table? Dinner is ready,” Hannibal reasoned.

Will watched at the doctor's hand, still in his hold, and nodded. Hannibal rose up and waited for Will to do the same, noticing with a hint of amusement how his hand wasn't released.

**

They ate the meal in silence, Will trying desperately not to look at Alana, fearing that another panic attack would surface. He was seated beside Hannibal, who was silently pleased with this arrangement. Alana herself seemed a bit uncomfortable, smiling slightly every time his gaze met Hannibal's.

However, when it was the dessert's turn, chocolate souffle with strawberries, Alana decided that she had to ask sooner or later. And she wasn't going to wait longer.

She started with a calm and harmless approach, trying to get the boy's attention: “Will?”

Will's eyes snapped to her right shoulder, and Alana felt already better, ignoring Hannibal's pointed look.

“We had a talk with Hannibal, and I'd like to ask you a question, if that's okay?” she asked, smiling a bit. Will nodded hesitantly, relieved that another attack didn't come.

“I was wondering if you would like to come to my place? Just once in a while. It's not good to isolate oneself from the others, and I'm sure that you'd like to visit other places as well.”

Will took a brief look at Hannibal, settling then to Alana's neck. The woman noticed the glance.

“No. I like it here,” Will stated then, his decision definite. Alana stared at Will sadly.

“I only want what's best for you, Will,” she tried, but saw that she couldn't change his mind.

Hannibal ate his dessert with satisfaction, realizing that he didn't have to do anything – Will was just doing him a favor with his stubbornness.

It didn't take long for Alana to understand that no matter what, Will wasn't going to listen to her or give in. She was upset, when she finished her last strawberries and her dessert wine, but Will didn't mind. He felt annoyed how no one could leave him alone. Jack had wanted to get him back to work immediately and now Alana tried to get him to coax him away.

“I don't need a babysitter, I'm not a child!”

Alana glanced at Hannibal, but the man wasn't even having his attention on her. She sighed.

“I didn't imply that, Will,” she swore.

Will said nothing, as he took the last bite of the souffle. He thanked for the meal and left the two alone in silence.

Alana sighed and turned to Hannibal, who started to clear the table. She didn't know what to say and she wasn't sure what she even should say. The whole scenario was a catastrophe. Alana hadn't thought that Will would be so against the arrangement. Apparently, she had been wrong.

“What do we do now?” Alana asked, unsure how to proceed. Hannibal filled the sink, rolled his shirt sleeves up and started to wash the dishes.

“We let him be,” he answered.

Chapter End Notes

I had a bit of a writer's block. I was trying to figure out how to write Alana, so yeah.. :'D

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will lay on his bed, sinking into the mattress with his thoughts. He was curled up, hands under his head, and his brown mop of hair was tousled over the pillow. Earlier, he had left his glasses on the nightstand, annoyed, slamming them with too much force. However, soon after, he had noticed with an unsatisfied glare that they didn't break.

Breathing steadily with eyes closed, he could hear the murmurs from downstairs. Alana was leaving, he noted with a pleased hum. It was good that he had left from the table, because it was clear to him that Alana would have tried to soften him up more.

Will was secretly happy that Alana cared about him, but he wasn't comfortable with the idea of going over to her place. He was sure that something embarrassing would happen, and he didn't want Alana to start to think about him as a child, which he wasn't. He couldn't even imagine sleeping in there. It would be uncomfortable for both of them. He couldn't just forget all that had happened before this.

There was a faint sound of the front door closing, and then silence. It was restful compared to his own house, where his dogs usually kept noise until they fell asleep. Will imagined all of his dogs snuggling on the floor, all side by side, keeping each other warm. He smiled at the image, feeling the warmth of it.

The lovely warm feeling filling Will's chest left him, when he heard a knock on his door. He was too tired to open his eyes, and he noted that he had almost fallen asleep. The knock came again, and Will mumbled a response, hearing then how the door opened with a faint creak.

With his eyes closed he couldn't see, but he could hear, and he recognized the steps to be Dr. Lecter's. He felt the mattress sink more, when the man settled beside his feet, sheets rustling with the movement.

Hannibal watched the boy's relaxed and smooth face, and the soft brown curls that encircled it. He could smell the calmness, and the subtle sweet undertone of him, now stronger as he was being closer to him. Will yawned, and Hannibal turned his attention to his half open mouth and white teeth.

“Have you calmed down now, Will?” Hannibal asked, voice soft in the darkness.

Will exhaled a hum. He was too tired to use any words, and it seemed that Dr. Lecter understood that, if anything could be deduced from the breath he gave in return.

Hannibal decided to leave the matter for tomorrow, as he rose from the bed and tucked the boy in, receiving a blissful mumble. He bent over and placed a light peck on Will's forehead. Will didn't mind at all, being fuzzy with sleepiness, and the man smiled slightly when he made his way to the door.

“Sleep tight, dear Will.”

**

The next morning was a blur of irritation, when Alana came over again, this time while Will and Hannibal were having their breakfast. Will's expression changed immediately to uneasiness when he spotted the familiar head of dark wavy hair. A few seconds later his face was blank with no stray of an emotion, when Alana smiled to him with a greet. He nodded to her, not really wanting to be rude.

Hannibal seated himself on the table again, not offering Alana anything this time. He was being inhospitable, but this time he didn't care. He had said to the woman to leave Will alone and here she was again, stubbornly trying to coax Will out of his grasp.

Alana took a seat beside Will, and watched as he took a mouthful of his meat pastry, chewing furiously. Alana sighed and crossed her legs under the table, preparing her speech. She waited patiently until Will had swallowed his mouthful before she spoke.

“Have you thought about it, Will?” Alana asked, a friendly and soft tone in her voice.

Hannibal stabbed his sausage, trying to ignore the conversation. Will eyed Alana's hands that were on the table.

“I.. I don't think it's a good idea...”

Will shied away from Alana's gaze, fidgeting on his seat and taking a sip from his apple juice. Alana smiled, being glad to get the boy to talk to her, as yesterday, Will almost didn't say a word. It must have been the shock. She clasped her hands together, and smiled cheerfully as she got his attention. Will looked at her dumbly.

“Why don't we go for a walk after you've eaten?” she asked.

The boy took a gulp of his drink and seemed to consider the suggestion. Alana waited patiently, her expression soft. Will nodded slowly, and she smiled, relieved. Maybe she could help him after all.

“Great. I'll wait until you're ready and then we can go, all right?” she inquired, delighted that he was at least trying to cooperate for once.

She got up and left to wait in the living room, leaving the two alone again. Will didn't notice how Hannibal's posture had changed, as he took another bite of his meat pastry. The man was tense, and he was glaring at his plate with still two small pieces of sausage. Alana had succeeded, at least for now.

Will blinked at Hannibal's direction and saw the momentary frown, until the man hid it and resumed to eat his last piece of breakfast. Will got his own plate empty after a minute and he smiled his thanks to the doctor, who still stayed on his seat and didn't gather the dishes as usual.

“Are you coming with us, Dr. Lecter?” Will asked, when the silence seemed to swallow the whole room with its gloomy atmosphere.

Hannibal smiled at him, getting finally up.

“No, I won't. I have some matters to attend to,” he answered, taking the plates and glasses with him.

Will pouted, following the man to the kitchen, where he got a pat on his head. Hannibal looked at him with amusement, and Will crossed his arms.

“You wanted to go with Alana, so off you go,” Hannibal stated, taking in the disgruntled expression on Will's face. Apparently Alana hadn't won yet.

**

They were walking down a road, to a small and quiet park with no small children playing around. There were no parents loafing on the benches, and nothing but swings. Will shrugged when he noticed that if he wanted to sit, he had to settle for a swing. He didn't mind it, and he liked the quietness of the place.

The only thing he could hear was the light wind and Alana's footsteps. He was sure that it wouldn't last though, because Alana had brought him with her just to talk, and it was obvious that she wanted him to talk to her.

They sat in silence, listening to the wind and watching it ruffle the grass, bringing it alive with every blow. Will was sure that Alana was used to this, being quiet, as she dealt with her patients. But he didn't want to be one of her patients, he didn't want to be psychoanalyzed, as he hated it, and he wondered if Alana only saw him as another one of her patients to tend.

The silence started to feel heavy and awkward, and Will knew that Alana was waiting for him to start, but he himself was waiting for Alana to say something. He didn't really have anything to say, and he doubted if anything he told would stay without being analyzed. The idea distressed him.

“...So,” Alana started, breaking the silence finally. Will sighed with relief.

“Would you like to start with what happened?” she asked, looking at Will expectantly. He shook his head, mumbling that he didn't know.

Alana looked at him with a hint of sadness, imagining what it must be to have to experience such a thing. She felt sorry for him, and she understood now a bit better why Hannibal hadn't said anything. It must have been better for Will himself, to be safe from the glances of his colleagues and friends.

“It's going to be ok,” she whispered, taking Will's small hand to her own.

**

Will returned roughly after the lunchtime, and he was smiling brightly when he strode to the living room, spotting Hannibal reading in one of his armchairs. The doctor glanced up, seeing Will's smile and returned to his book.

“Alana bought me lunch,” Will said, taking a seat on the couch.

Hannibal didn't say anything, as he turned a page. Will frowned and sat still for a few minutes, until he got up and skipped to where the doctor sat. He circled behind the armchair and started to read the book from there. It was one of those psychology books again. He didn't find it interesting at all, so he sighed, earning an exhale from the doctor.

“Can we go to see my dogs?” Will asked, his voice full of hope.

“No, I'm afraid, not,” he heard the man answer grumpily, turning yet another page of his book.

“Why not?” Will complained. He hadn't seen his dogs today at all, and he needed to see them. They needed company and food.

He didn't receive an answer, however. It seemed that the doctor was angry about something, and Will wondered what that was. He hadn't seen Dr. Lecter like this ever before. But the most important thing was now his dogs, and he wanted to see them. He pondered if Cleo's paw was already better. The puppy was going to be all right, he thought, and Winston would watch over her.

“I want to see my dogs,” he stated again.

Hannibal hummed, and Will glared the book.

“If you're not taking me to my dogs, I'll ask Alana,” he said then, irritated.

Dr. Lecter closed the book with a slam and placed it on the table. Will watched baffled how the man rose up and went to retrieve his car keys, turning then to him.

“Are you coming, then?”

Chapter End Notes

Will gets what he wants. What a spoiled child... XD

Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will lifted Cleo up from the couch and hugged the puppy into his chest, burying his face into her fur. He smiled brightly, turning his gaze then to Cleo's paw. It was healing profoundly now, and it would take a couple of days at most until she would be able to walk properly.

All of his dogs were sitting in a circle, leaving Will in the middle of it with Cleo, who nuzzled her nose to Will's chest. Hannibal stood in the doorway, displeased at this arrangement. He had known that Will would use Alana against him. If he left the boy with her, Alana would get the upper hand of the situation. It left a bad taste in his mouth, knowing that she would try somehow to get Will out of his reach. He decided that he would have to keep the woman away at any cost.

When will turned his head and smiled at Hannibal, the man returned it with constraint. It seemed that Will was unaware of Dr. Lecter's concern, as he just smiled brighter, sitting then on the floor, starting to tend to his dogs. He retrieved a brush earlier, and now he combed it through their fur, the dogs making noise when it got stuck into stray tangles.

Hannibal watched how the dog hair whirled in the air, getting everywhere, while he retreated farther from the mess. His suit was going to suffer today, he mused with a frown, deciding then to ask Will about his walk with Alana to get his thoughts elsewhere.

“I told her everything,” Will stated, as he worked the comb through the fur. Hannibal pursed his lips with annoyance.

“She's going to tell Jack, I know,” he added then with a carefree tone.

The doctor stood in silence for a moment and sighed inaudibly. Will wasn't making this any easier for him now that he had went and told Alana everything that only he had known. The woman would stick her nose into this case for sure now that Will had opened up.

“How did she take it?” Hannibal asked, ignoring his own thoughts.

Will turned his gaze to the man's knees that were on eye-level with him. He was silent, until he smiled again.

“She's worried, as always, but she promised to help me. And she said that she's going to phone you about that.”

Hannibal stood motionless, but he could swear that he felt his blood boil more under his skin, as anger grew up silently, forcing its way into his every cell. Alana was going to interfere with everything, it seemed.

**

They spent a couple of hours with the dogs, since Will didn't want to leave immediately after seeing and tending them. They took the dogs outside, and Will tried to walk one of them with little success. He was still so short that it was impossible not to get tangled with the other dogs that wanted his attention and so they circled around him.

Soon Will lay on the ground, tripped by one of his smaller dogs. He laughed out loud, when they started to use him as a barrier and jumped over him, enthusiastically one after the other. That was when Hannibal's phone rang, and the man felt his blood boil again, when he saw the caller ID.

It was Alana of course, and answering to the phone he could already imagine what she wanted. It didn't surprise him at all how the woman started the conversation with the usual, "*How is he doing?*"

"Good, actually, he's playing with his dogs," Hannibal answered with a forced smile.

He could hear something rustle at the other end of the line, and he wondered what Alana was doing at the moment. Her voice was full of joy, when she laughed, relieved.

"I asked Will again about the arrangements," she said then, with a more serious tone.

"Will stated his preferences already yesterday," Hannibal remarked, silently irritated how he knew what the woman was up to.

"You have patients, Hannibal, and it's not fair to them if you cancel your appointments just because of Will. It's unprofessional, and I know that you know it," Alana reasoned, already leading the conversation to where she wanted it.

"It's only rational – you keep your appointments, and I'll be with Will at those times, as I don't have anything urgent to tend to," she continued, not giving Hannibal any time to argue with her.

"Will said yes, Hannibal," she delivered the final blow. His hand balled to a fist on its own, and he stood still, breathing steadily as he watched how Will still played with his dogs.

Will still laughed, as he lay on the ground, grass tickling his bare arms, his t-shirt clinging to his skin, as he basked in the sunlight.

"Hannibal? Are you there?"

"Yes."

"Good. I'm going to pick Will up in half an hour, I have something planned out," Alana smiled as she closed the basket she had been working on.

Hannibal ended the call with a tight-lipped response.

**

Will was happy when he saw Alana come out of her car, wearing a green summer dress that matched her eyes and hair beautifully. She was looking radiant in the sunlight, and her smile brought out a joy in Will, who remembered her kind words.

Hannibal watched with masked ire how she howered over Will and asked if he was ready to go, that she had planned a very pleasant schedule for them, and that he would be home after Hannibal's last appointments were over.

Alana took Will's hand into her own and bid goodbye to the doctor, who stood and watched as the two headed to where her car was, and then disappeared from his view. He made his way to his own car and sighed, fury still trying to take over him. Alana was smart, and she had gotten what she wanted, and it truly irritated him.

He sat in his car for a few minutes until he started the engine. He had still at least four patients today, and he wondered momentarily how Alana had known, remembering then that his first patient for the day was Franklin. He sighed and turned the steering wheel.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter is a bit shorter, but I wanted to leave Alana's plans to the next chapter. :3 My holiday is ending soon (my school is starting again next week), so that's going to affect my updates as well. I have to study for my matriculation examination. ,__,

Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Alana parked the car and smiled when she got out, turning her gaze up to the sky, admiring the good weather. The sky was still clear and there were no clouds at all to disturb the pleasing warmth, as the sunlight blazed. She turned to retrieve the mysterious basket from the trunk, and saw how Will eyed it curiously.

They started to walk to their destination, and soon Will noticed that the place was familiar to him. He had been here earlier with Hannibal. It was the same park in which he had eaten ice cream and thrown a small tantrum. Will followed Alana silently to the park and watched how she spread a blanket on the grass, placed the basket on it, and sat down. He followed her example. It became soon quite clear that they were going to have a picnic.

Alana opened the basket and revealed all of the snacks that she had prepared for them to eat. They were nothing too heavy though, since she knew that Hannibal would disapprove it if his dinner went to waste. She handed Will a small sandwich and a juice box, taking some grapes herself.

They sat and ate, enjoyed the light breeze, and the sun that shined brightly still up the sky. It was peaceful, and Will didn't even notice any of the other kids and their laughing voices, until one familiar voice called him.

“Will?”

He turned his head to see a girl, about six years old, smiling at him, as she sat next to him on the blanket, ignoring Alana completely.

“It's you! Do you remember me?” she asked then, her smile spreading with joy.

Alana watched the little girl with interest, and she wondered how Will knew her. The girl was wearing a pink dress with flowers on it, and her cheeks were rosy when she smiled. She caught Alana looking at her, and she returned the look, taking in her appearance, turning then to Will again.

“You're not with your daddy today?”

Alana tried not to laugh, as she covered her mouth with her hand, amused by the girl's question. Will was squirming and blushing, but the girl took it as shyness. The girl turned to Alana again, smiling slyly, while playing with her dress hem.

“You're Will's mum? You're very pretty!” she stated, not noticing how Will almost choked on his orange juice.

“Oh, my name is Sarah. I forgot to say, sorry.”

Alana smiled at Sarah and asked if she wanted a sandwich herself, giving her one when she nodded enthusiastically, taking a large bite of it. Alana hoped that the girl got enough food at home, as she watched how quickly she ate the sandwich, taking then a handful of grapes on her lap.

The girl was a chatty one, and Will shrugged her questions off, while he tried to avoid the physical contact she tried to offer him with hugs and tickles. She wanted to make some things clear as well, and Alana was amused by her, because the girl was quite straightforward.

“You should let Will wear whatever he wants... he was sad the other day,” she announced, making Alana frown with confusion.

“I wasn't sad,” Will muttered, but Sarah didn't listen to him, as she yelled, “Yes you were!”

Will pouted when he took the final sip of his juice, playing with the straw with his teeth, nibbling at it. That was when Sarah leant over him and hugged him, startling Will so much that he almost swallowed the straw.

Alana looked at them with a delighted smile pulling at her lips, thinking that they were so cute like that, Sarah laughing and Will blushing furiously with an uncomfortable mumble for her to let him go.

**

Hannibal leant back into his leather armchair in his office, forcing a reassuring smile on his face. These appointments with this man were always so slow-paced that he wanted to always strangle him, when the appointment was almost over.

This time Franklin babbled how he had no friends, other than that Tobias, he had so many times talked about. That no one really cared about him, and how his pitiful life really was. It wasn't anything new, really, since Hannibal had heard these things so many times he could almost repeat them by word.

The man in question sniffled and tried not to cry, again, when Hannibal told him that the only way to get friends was to approach other people.

“I've tried that, really,” Franklin stated with a loud sniff.

Hannibal stared at the man's now wet face and offered him a tissue from the box he kept on the table near him. He had to deal with crying patients often, and he was irritated always when they left their used tissues all around his office, not even bothering to search for the trash can.

“Franklin,” he started then, getting the man's attention immediately.

“It doesn't count when they can't see you,” he continued with a false smile. He knew that Franklin didn't approach people directly, but watched where they went and followed them, then trying to talk to them from the distance. It was pathetic, really.

“Oh,” Franklin exhaled, watching Dr. Lecter with a now bright expression.

“Maybe you could tag along some time, Dr. Lecter? See how I make progress?” he asked then hopefully, his eyes glinting with excitement.

Hannibal grimaced inwardly at the man's overly greasy tone. It wasn't the first time when this happened, either.

“No, I don't think that's necessary,” he answered smoothly, as he rose up from his seat and made his way to his desk.

“Now, same time next week?” he asked, glancing at Franklin and seeing how the smile died on his face, once again.

**

“We're going to another park?” Will asked, after Alana had left the now empty basket in the car, leading Will to the other end of the road.

“It's not just any park, Will, I hope you like it,” she replied with a mysterious smile.

Will watched curiously how the path was edged with bushes and tall trees, trying to guess where it ended. He heard snuffling and barking the further they went, and Will's heart hammered with excitement, already able to recognize the noises and tell where Alana was taking him.

The park came into their view, and Will's breath hitched. The park was obviously for dogs, and there were at least twenty of them, with their owners playing with them and trying to coax them to do tricks.

Alana took his hand into her own and walked them to the gate, letting themselves in. Will watched how the dogs enjoyed themselves, and he came over with an immense urge to pet every one of them.

They made their way to a woman, who scratched at her shepherd dog behind its ears, the dog nuzzling at the woman's legs. The dog's owner noticed them, when they were a couple of meters from her, and she smiled friendly.

“You want to pet her?” she asked, her eyes questioning, as she looked at Will warmly.

Will nodded hesitantly, and made his way to the dog, when the woman laughed, “It's alright, she doesn't bite.”

Alana watched how Will buried his hand into the dog's fur and petted her, smiling at the same time warmly at the dog. Will really looked happy, and it was all Alana really asked for.

**

Hannibal was preparing dinner when Will finally rang the doorbell. Alana had left him on the front door, as she squeezed his shoulder and bid him goodbye, then gave him a warm embrace, which left Will awkwardly stand at the door.

He didn't have to wait long for the door to open, and when he entered the house he could already smell the sweetened onions and the meat, maturing in the oven. He could swear that his mouth watered already from the scent of dinner, and he was silently thankful that it wouldn't take long to be served.

Hannibal made his way to the kitchen, and Will followed behind, seeing then how the doctor started to make the dessert, mixing the eggs and sugar first together, adding then melted butter and small slices of banana into the dough.

“What are you making?” Will asked curiously, taking a better look at the dough.

“Something simple for a change. I heard that you like banana muffins,” Hannibal said with a slight smile. Will's eyes shone, when he smiled in return.

“How was your day with Alana?”

“It was great. I saw Sarah again, too,” Will told, watching how the man scooped the dough into the molds. Hannibal lifted his eyes momentarily to Will, remembering the small girl.

“Alana took me on a picnic, and then to a dog park. I was surprised, I didn't even know there was one around here.”

Hannibal pursed his lips briefly. Alana knew that Will's soft spot were dogs, and she had taken advantage of that.

“Alana promised to take me there again someday.”

“That's nice of her,” Hannibal replied curtly, keeping his face blank. Will shifted his gaze from the muffins to him briefly, shrugging as a response.

Hannibal moved to the oven and took the meat out, placing the muffins in instead. The scent of it overwhelmed Will, and he swallowed tightly. He felt hungry, while watching how Dr. Lecter placed steaks on plates with the onions and the small potatoes and mini carrots, pouring Béarnaise sauce atop of the vegetables, decorating the corners of the plates with marigold.

Will helped to set the table, and after the muffins were taken out of the oven to cool a bit down, they started to eat. The meat was tender on Will's tongue and he couldn't keep the faint moan in his throat, when he tasted the flavor. Hannibal smiled into his wine glass, taking a sip of the liquid.

“Alana said that she's going to buy me some clothes,” Will said, remembering how she insisted on it.

Hannibal's smile died on his lips, and he stabbed the steak with his fork and started to slice it. Alana again.

“Why? You have plenty of clothes, Will,” he questioned, keeping his eyes on the steak, trying to control his actions and not to shred it completely.

“She thought that I needed something more suitable... for tomorrow.”

Hannibal raised his eyes now, watching how Will swallowed another piece of meat, licking his lips afterwards.

“She said that she's taking me to a beach,” Will smiled around another forkful.

Will didn't notice how Hannibal's knuckles turned white around his silverware, the man gripping them furiously. He savoured the blend that the sauce and the vegetables made with the meat, and grinned.

Chapter End Notes

Not very wise to write food porn at 2AM, when you know that there's no way that you can get any steaks yourself.

Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Alana's breakfast was interrupted when her phone rang. She had just started to enjoy her homemade croissants, and now that she had to get up and leave the still warm treats alone, which was a struggle. She sighed, but stayed composed and hoped that the call wouldn't come from the nurses from Port Haven Psychiatric facility. The last time she saw Abigail, the girl had been more than healthy, but she still feared for her well being.

Thankfully the call was from Hannibal, and Alana relaxed immediately when she heard the familiar voice.

“I hope I'm not interrupting anything,” the doctor started. Alana glanced at her unfinished breakfast, seeing how her pastries cooled, the steam leaving them with her every breath.

“No, you did not. I was going to call you anyway soon,” she replied with a smile.

Hannibal stayed silent on the other end of the line, and Alana took that silence as an opportunity to tell him her plans. She took a seat on the table and started to play with her almost empty coffee mug.

“I'm taking Will shopping first, and after that we'll go to a beach,” she smiled, already thinking of all the possibilities for the clothes she wanted to buy for him. The weather was sunny and warm, and she was looking forward to the whole day with Will.

“Yes, that's exactly why I phoned you, Alana,” Hannibal interrupted her thoughts, “You see, Will can't go out today.”

Alana stared at her coffee, her smile wavering. She had planned everything already, and she was sure that Will would have loved every minute of it. The concern crawled its way into her chest, when she imagined all of the reasons why Will would be unable to spend time with her. She loathed the silence in which Hannibal had drifted.

“Why's that? Is he okay?” she asked, her voice full of worry.

“Not really. He has gotten an infection.”

Alana's hand gripped the mug as she processed the news. They didn't know how Will's immune system would take any infections now that he was smaller, it could be even life-threatening. She could feel how her heart thundered in her chest, even if she tried to remain calm.

“Do you know what it is?”

She truly hoped that it wouldn't be anything too severe.

“Most likely Campylobacter. I think it's possible that he caught it from the dogs,” Hannibal answered, his tone even. Alana couldn't hear any accusation in his voice, but she felt still the pang in her chest.

“Oh my God! I took Will to that dog park! How is he? I'll come right away and-”

“Alana, he's going to be fine. I'll take care of him. You don't have to come,” Hannibal reassured, his voice soothing Alana's distress.

They ended the call shortly after Hannibal was finished with his monologue, convincing that he was capable of handling Will on his own and that it wasn't going to affect his patient's appointments. Hannibal mused after the call that Alana truly acted like an overly concerned mother sometimes.

**

Will couldn't remember the last time he had felt this terrible and weak. All he could do was to lie in his bed and curl up into a ball, and bear with the constant pain. He turned down every meal that Dr. Lecter tried to serve to him, and he shivered after the water he had drank came up, his stomach cramping with the pain.

He tried to drink the fluids he was offered, as it was the only way to stay hydrated, and he hated the idea of having to go to the hospital. Hannibal had assured him that as long as he was drinking, he would be alright. The doctor had informed him that as soon as he could keep everything in his stomach he would be given the antibiotics, and so Will still suffered and tried to do as was said.

It had started at night, when Will stumbled to the bathroom and emptied his system of the meal he had for dinner. He had stayed in the bathroom, curled up on the floor and cried, and that was how Dr. Lecter found him.

It had been obvious to Hannibal instantly, what was the cause of Will's illness, and he had ushered him back to the bed and helped him right after that to keep him on fluids.

Now as Hannibal made his way to Will's room, he was only pleased that Alana's plans were foiled. Hopefully she would stay away this time, and leave Will alone as well. The illness was truly a blessing, in a way, and now he could take care of Will all by himself, like he had previously intended.

The small form of a curled up Will greeted him, when Hannibal opened the door and stepped into the room. Will lay under the covers, and it was visible that he was shivering with every breath.

Hannibal walked over to the bed and knelt on the floor, taking in the hazy look in Will's eyes. The usual sweet scent was stronger this time, but it had an undertone of oily sweat. He lowered his palm on Will's forehead and immediately came to the conclusion that he had a fever. A high one.

“Will?”

He didn't get an answer. Instead, Will pressed his head into the palm that was still placed on his forehead, and tried to get closer to him. Hannibal could hear a mumble, but he couldn't tell what the boy tried to say.

“Will? Can you hear me?” he asked, still observing the clouded eyes.

“Mmm,” was the answer, as Will lowered Hannibal's hand and took the whole arm into a hug. “Cold,” he mumbled again, shivering.

Hannibal shifted and tried to get up, but Will was still holding his arm. He watched how it disappeared under the covers and sighed.

“Will, I need to go and get you your medicine and a cold pack,” he said, noticing how Will frowned instantly.

“No.”

He felt the grip on his hand to intensify. It was quite impressive, as Will was otherwise very weak. He could see how those blue eyes glared into the emptiness, and he smiled.

“You have to let go, Will.”

Will shook his head and shivered, the trembles making their way to Hannibal's hand. He could feel the fevered body warmth through the pajamas Will wore, and the shivers that traveled all the way through his body. He doubted that the high fever was good to Will's body or mind. They had to try and lower it.

“Will,” he started, this time with more command in his tone.

The blue eyes flared with stubbornness, but soon he gave in, and released the arm with a pout. Hannibal pulled the covers more firmly around Will, so he wouldn't get cold, making his way then to kitchen to retrieve the medicine, a glass of water and a cold pack.

Will was still pouting when he returned, and he recoiled, when the cold made contact with his forehead, as Hannibal placed the towel wrapped cold pack on it. Will swallowed his pills reluctantly, and buried himself into the covers afterwards. He hoped that his stomach wouldn't repel them.

Hannibal carried a chair beside the bed and settled into it, watching how the darkness devoured everything around them. Only Will's head was visible, the covers hiding him completely otherwise. His blue eyes were more focused now, and he stared at Hannibal's tie.

The doctor leant closer and started to stroke Will's hair, the blue eyes closing with a satisfied breath.

“Sleep, dear Will. It will help you get better,” Hannibal whispered to the darkness.

Chapter End Notes

Like I said, school is going to affect my updates, and sadly I guess the weekends are the only days I can update for now on, until my upcoming exam is over and done with. :(

Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The sun was still high when Will opened his eyes. He had slept through at least lunch, but no one had come to wake him up, which he appreciated as he still felt sore and sick. His pains were not so bad anymore, but he could feel his stomach complaining over not getting food, and at the same time trying to get rid of everything it contained. He wasn't sure he could eat yet, even though it had been a while since he ate anything at all.

Trying to get up was a struggle, and when he finally sat up on the edge of his bed, his head swam. He had no idea what time it was, since he couldn't spot any clocks in the room, and it was even harder to keep his eyes open.

After steadying himself he dared to leave the bed, leaning on the wall as he made his way out of the bedroom. As soon as he opened the door he was able to smell something in the air, and he deduced that Dr. Lecter was cooking. Taking steady and cautious steps, he got to the stairway. Walking slowly it was easier to reach the doorway to the kitchen, and soon enough he saw the doctor's back facing him.

He walked over to Hannibal and tried to peer at what he was making. Will took a hold of his apron, trying to balance himself. He watched hazily how Hannibal's hands worked graciously.

“What are you making?” he asked after looking for a few minutes, making the man turn his attention to him. Hannibal smiled surreptitiously and turned the stove's heat down a bit.

“Something that's good for your stomach,” he replied, and hid a smile as Will tried to crane to see better.

Hannibal helped Will to his seat on the table and placed his palm on Will's forehead, making him flinch a bit first, until he leaned on the cold hand. It was obvious that he still had a fever. Will wobbled dazedly when Hannibal removed his hand and made his way to the stove, stirring the soup he was making. He returned soon with a bowl of it, placing it in front of Will.

“Creamy broccoli cheese soup, easy to swallow with a sore throat, and it gives the warmth you need,” Hannibal answered to Will's stare.

Dr. Lecter poured Will a glass of water and handed it to him. Will took it into his trembling hands and regarded it with his clouded eyes. He took a quick sip of it and lowered it then onto the table.

“Thank you, dad,” Will said, and froze immediately after realizing what he had said. Hannibal had paused filling his own wine glass, but resumed shortly.

“It's quite alright, Will.”

Lowering his gaze with rosy cheeks with embarrassment, regarding the still hot soup, Will took a spoonful of it and blew before taking it into his mouth. He had his eyes firmly on the soup, and he examined the texture with his tongue, taking in the flavor. He took careful spoonfuls and took his time eating it, trying to not raise his eyes to the doctor.

He didn't leave the table for a long time after he had finished his soup. He sat silently and listened to the silence and relaxed with every breath he took. The kitchen had a pleasantly warm atmosphere, and leaning on the chair was keeping his head clear. The dizziness was leaving him with every steady breathe, and he could smell all of the herbs in the air.

Will was brought back from the calm when a steaming cup of tea was placed in front of him. He took it into his hands, warming them before taking a cautious sip. It was something he hadn't tasted before, but after a few sips he started to like the flavor, and identified it to be mint. The liquid warmed his throat with every swallow, and he liked the pleasant but light burn it brought into his stomach. The tea was truly helping his pains.

Having kept his eyes on the cup he hadn't noticed that he was being watched. Hannibal took a seat right across from him, and he watched how Will took in the warmth that the tea brought to him. Being in the center of someone's attention was new to him, and it felt strange. The only one's he had ever been in such a position were his own dogs, and they truly liked to be with him anywhere. They always sensed if something was wrong, and they always came to him and tried to make him feel happy again.

He felt the eyes on him, as he took another sip of the tea. He felt more vulnerable than usually and he blamed his fever as he tried to hide behind the cup. Hannibal remained silent, when Will downed the last drops of the tea and lowered the cup onto the table. He couldn't deal with the silence anymore, it had become thick and uncomfortable.

Will raised his eyes minutely on Hannibal's own, and lowered them just as quickly. He felt strangely nervous.

"What is it?" he heard the familiar voice ask with the same old smooth accent.

"Nothing," Will replied shyly, taking a hold of his knees and trying to keep himself from shivering. He was still so cold. The soup and tea had warmed him up just for a moment, but as soon as he had finished them he could feel the cold roaming up again. He could still feel the doctor's eyes on him, taking a note of his unfortunate state.

"It doesn't seem like nothing to me, dear Will," he said with a slight frown as he left his chair and walked right beside Will, placing his cold hand on the boy's forehead. It felt heavenly with the temperature, so he leaned into it.

Hannibal could feel the high temperature as soon as his hand came to contact with Will's forehead.

"You still have a fever," he stated and took notice of the shivering that traveled up Will's spine.

The fever was breaking out, now hopefully for good. Even though he liked to see Will dependent on him and the sickness had made Alana back off, it wasn't good if he remained sick for long. It would definitely do nothing good to Will, who had been suffering earlier from the nightmares. It was a good thing that they had disappeared, though Hannibal doubted if that truly was the case.

"You should rest, Will. It's not good to stay up when you're not feeling fell," he told him soothingly while stroking his hair.

Will nodded, but remained seated. It seemed that his limbs were too powerless to support him. Apparently he had to carry him upstairs. Taking a hold of the fragile boy he lifted him up and supported his weight with his arms, making Will blush. He tried to struggle out of Hannibal's arms, but the doctor shushed him and Will stilled after that.

“Now, let's get you back to the bed,” Dr. Lecter murmured and started to walk up the stairs, his steps steady and silent.

Will rested his heavy head on Hannibal's chest and listened to the solid rhythm of the man's heartbeat. He could smell the earlier cooked food and rich perfume on him, and as they headed to upstairs his eyes were already closed. The nearby warmth and familiar smells lulled him to sleep, and when Hannibal arrived to the quest room was Will heavy asleep.

When Hannibal tried to place Will back onto the bed, he took a firm hold of his suit jacket in his sleep. It brought a silent smile on the doctor's lips.

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry this update took so long! My exam's over and done with, so I hope that I can write more regularly now.

Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was bound to happen sooner or later, especially now since he had an extra mouth to feed. So Hannibal wasn't one bit surprised when Jack appeared behind his front door one day, after Will was already in a better condition, his sickness subdued and gone.

Jack didn't seem happy at all, having to come to the doctor's house to be able to talk with his special agent, who was supposedly on a sick leave. He hadn't gotten his waited phone call either, so it was clear why his face was pulled into a frown when Hannibal opened the door for him. Will was still in his unfortunate condition, and it seemed to irritate Jack greatly, that he wouldn't be able to work, according to Dr. Lecter.

The greeting was exchanged shortly between the two men and Hannibal let Jack in, following him into the living room where Will sat on the plush couch and was reading a book. It had become one of Will's habits to borrow books from Dr. Lecter's library, which was stacked with different kinds of books, all classics. The living room's couch was his own place to read the books he carried from the high shelves, and Hannibal noted with a pleasant surprise that Will always returned them to their rightful place, never leaving them scattered all over the place.

Will raised his eyes from his book when Jack arrived, Hannibal right behind him. His gaze narrowed instantly, as he saw the serious expression on Jack's face. He knew what was coming, but he asked anyway.

“New bodies? You know that me being like *this* won't help you at all,” Will stated, lowering the book on to his lap. Hannibal hid his satisfied smile and watched how Jack shifted weight from one foot to another.

“I don't care about your situation right now. It's the Ripper, Will!” Jack snarled.

Will's eyes widened. He had been waiting that this would happen eventually, but he hadn't thought that he would have to deal with the Ripper being like this. It was clear that Jack wouldn't take no for an answer, he had to do this despite the situation.

“We've found two bodies – for now – and they fit the Ripper's profile profoundly. The man, Mr. Boivin, was found in his bedroom, brutalized and missing his lungs and chunks of his loin,” Jack started his explanation, “His rib cage had been removed from the body and placed on his stomach, his hands 'holding' it still.”

“His windpipe was crushed, and the whole bed was soaked with dried blood.”

Will closed his eyes. It had been so long since he saw a crime scene, the Ripper's work, any victims. Hannibal's gaze was on Will, measuring his expressions. He didn't like that Jack barged in and wanted to interrupt their peaceful routine, but he was curious about Will. What

would happen to his mind now, as it had started its resisting earlier, trying to flee from the vivid pictures of murder and murderers.

“What about the other body?” Will asked then, hearing how Jack sighed.

“We found her just about now, we haven't identified her yet, and we need DNA tests, because her face has been mashed in. However, she's approximately in her mid-thirties, that's pretty much all we know for now, and that she has long, dark brown hair.”

Will nodded, and shifted his eyes onto the book on his lap. “Are you sure it's the Ripper? With the woman, I mean,” he inquired after a while.

Jack's eyes narrowed and his mouth tightened into a thin line.

“I wouldn't be here otherwise. The Ripper has started his killings again,” the man answered, already irritated. “The woman was brutalized as well, the Ripper had taken her heart.”

The room remained silent after Jack's last announcement, and everyone's eyes were on Will, who had his own on the book he was still holding. It was clear that Jack waited for Will's response, an agreement that he would help with the case like usual, but the boy sat silently, gripping the book with his now cold hands.

Hannibal watched how Will fought his mental struggle and thought of the possibilities, Jack crossing his arms and waiting impatiently an answer.

Will raised his eyes and glanced first shortly at Hannibal, turning to stare at Jack's elbow then.

“I... I don't know.”

“Will. You know fully that we need you in these cases, we have to capture the Chesapeake Ripper soon, he's been on the loose for too long.”

“I know...” Will sighed, and lowered his gaze once again.

Hannibal's eyes glinted when he heard a soft sigh and saw how Will nodded his head once. It was enough to Jack, and soon he ushered the boy out of the living room, immediately ready to leave to the crime scene. However, Hannibal wasn't keen on letting the man handle Will – he didn't want Jack to mess with his scheme that was already bearing fruit.

Will didn't seem eager either, when Jack tried to get him to the car, so when Hannibal suggested that he would take Will to the scene, he saw how the boy instantly relaxed. Jack paused with his hovering, but didn't question anything. He realized that if he wanted Will on the case, he had no choice but to loosen the leash a bit.

**

They sat in the silence the whole drive, Hannibal seeing from the corner of his eye how Will's hands trembled on his lap. He was shaking like a leaf, and his skin was pale, like it hadn't seen sun in ages.

Will dreaded that getting into this had been a mistake that he was going to regret later on, and his senses screamed to him when the car came to a halt. He couldn't hide anymore either, now that he was here everyone was bound to see him, a mere kid, snooping around like usual – couldn't stay away despite the state of affairs. He didn't like this at all, as it had been his motive not to let anyone see him, which had crumpled up when Dr. Lecter saw him the first time, Alana soon after.

As they exited the car and made their way to the scene, Hannibal beside Will, everyone's heads turned and they could hear whispers here and there. However, Jack was soon with them and he cleared the way to the lone car that stood on the edge of the forest.

The forensic team was still clearing evidence, but when Jack arrived they raised their heads from their work. The first thing they saw was Will, behind one of Hannibal's pant legs, peering from there awkwardly.

“Oh my God!” Beverly squealed, when she got a good glimpse of him.

Jimmy and Brian were speechless, when Beverly left her spot and knelt in front of the miniature Will, whose eyes were wide with terror.

“Will? Is that really you?! You're the cutest kid I've ever seen!” Beverly confessed with a bright smile on her face.

“I didn't know some still practiced dark magic...” Brian joked, earning a glare from Jack.

“You've tried it?” Jimmy asked in return, giving a thoughtful look over Will, who squirmed with the unwanted attention.

“All right, back to work!” Jack barked, making the team flinch with the raised voice.

Beverly left to retrieve her supplies and joined her colleagues again, taking the last bits of evidence with her, when the scene was cleared once again like in old times.

Will was becoming even more uneasy, when everyone left, except Hannibal, who still stood right behind him like he had requested. He hadn't done this for so long, and in this body that he wasn't exactly sure how it would go.

Hannibal watched with interest how Will made his way to the body and regarded it at first, taking in the once beautiful face, now mashed and sliced, her chest with the measured cut and the gaping hole that greeted him. After a while Will closed his eyes, and breathed in and out evenly.

He could feel the shades creeping into his mind once again, see the red spots forming behind his eyelids. A hand gripping his throat, cutting off all the air. His head burning with the pain, a massive force pressing him down. He couldn't breathe.

The blood was flowing free and all he could see was red, his hands smeared with warm, crimson blood. The copper's scent rich in the air, overwhelming every sense.

“*Will.*”

He tried to breathe, but the redness was enveloping him in, taking him away from everything else. He couldn't do anything but let it in along with a scream he heard, a woman screaming as she was carved open.

There was a pressure on him, something warm again pressed onto him. He felt light and tried to identify what the pressure was, his mind numb and full of red. His whole body was shivering, and he could feel the cold, but still there was more warmth, taking him in.

Will could hear whispers nearby, not understanding their meaning, but they were as warm as the already distant blood. His senses were coming back slowly, and now instead of copper he could smell the safe, familiar scent of a finer aftershave.

Will opened his eyes and watched with an unfocused gaze, dumbfounded, at Hannibal, whose dress shirt was soaked. He took in his surroundings and noticed soon after that he was in the bathroom, back at Hannibal's home, in the bath tub, *naked*. But what was more terrifying, was that he wasn't a kid anymore – he was back to normal!

Chapter End Notes

It was bound to happen sooner or later.

Chapter 21

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will was numb with shock and he couldn't understand what had happened – why he changed back so suddenly. He shivered in the tub and lowered his gaze from Hannibal, who was silently observing him. He could feel how his ears burned with embarrassment, but felt still so cold that he couldn't stop trembling.

He startled when he felt warm water streaming down on him and into the tub replacing the cold – Hannibal had turned the tap. Will looked up at him, thanking him silently. He could see the hidden worry in the doctor's eyes, and he felt terrible. He had been a burden to Hannibal ever since he changed, and now when he was back to normal he was still useless. He didn't want to rely on the man so much, it was wrong.

Will hung his head, grabbing fistfuls of his hair, trying to get a hold of himself. He could remember and *see* the darkness he was almost pulled into, the terrifying craving for thick blood, the screams ringing in his ears. A nightmare behind his eyelids, waiting for being set free.

A warm hand was placed on top of his own, reassuring. Will loosened his grip from his hair, feeling how the fingers started to caress his locks. He opened his eyes and saw Hannibal still watching him. He felt safe once again, like every time when Dr. Lecter was nearby. It seemed that he couldn't just pretend like nothing had happened between them when he was a kid, he had to live with it from now on.

“What's on your mind, Will?” Hannibal asked whilst combing his fingertips through Will's hair.

“...Nothing,” Will replied shyly, averting his gaze.

He felt ridiculous now, being naked in front of the man. He had seen him many times before this, but at the time he hadn't been a grown-up. It was embarrassing, now that he thought about it, he had let the man bathe him numerous times. Will blushed furiously just thinking about it. He bit his lower lip when he heard a faint sigh.

“Do you remember anything?”

Will shook his head.

“Where are we, Will?” Dr. Lecter asked then, receiving a dumbfounded look from him.

“At your place?” Will answered hesitantly. Hannibal nodded and allowed him a small smile.

“You had a seizure on the scene and blacked out. What happened?”

Will felt tremors running down his spine, seeing again all of the murderer's shadows in his mind's eye, snickering and lurking around every corner of his mind. He didn't like it at all. It had been quiet for so long, and now they were again screaming – threatening to break free.

“I- I don't know...” Will sighed, closing his eyes and seeing the blood again. He couldn't escape them ever, not for eternity.

“What did you *see*?”

He felt his heart leap and his throat closing. Will swallowed the lump and tried to speak, but nothing came out. He was shaking and gasping for breath again. Another panic attack making its way through him without mercy. Will wanted to break down and cry – he had thought that being sick was the worst feeling he had ever had, but it appeared that being in his own mind was the worst of all.

“Shh, it's all right,” he heard a whisper in his ear. “I'll take care of you,” Hannibal whispered while holding Will, feeling the trembles leaving his body.

Will breathed in the luxurious scent of him, taking comfort of the warmth he was enveloped in. It was horrifying how his mind had become such a mess, he hadn't been this fragile before.

“I could see *him- all of them*,” he stuttered, still trying to even out his breathing.

Hannibal's fingertips halted for a second, but Will wasn't paying attention anymore, he was thinking again, trying to get his thoughts together. The seizure had complicated things – he was sure that he had missed something, something very important that had to do with the case.

“What could you see?” Dr. Lecter prompted, trying to get the man's attention again.

Will shook his head and remained silent. He was shivering again – cold making its way into his every bone. His limbs were numb with cold and they were prickling because of the temperature variation. Being first in cold water and then turning it warm, he truly hoped that he wouldn't catch a cold or anything worse. He was already in a miserable condition, having to deal with all of his mental struggles.

He was brought out of the haze when gentle hands guided him up from the tub, Hannibal wrapping him into a soft towel. He clung to it and startled when he lost his eyesight as Dr. Lecter tended to his damp hair.

“It was the Ripper,” Will whispered softly under the towel, his words muffled. “I could see his shadow, his satisfaction when he opened up that woman.” Will shifted a bit and let Hannibal handle the stray locks that fell in his eyes.

“It was different than usual... he wasn't just butchering a pig this time,” Will remarked then.

Hannibal's eyes glinted with pride and he watched, fascinated, how Will uncovered the case, one piece at a time like a fine puzzle. He couldn't ever think of comparing him to anyone,

Will was unique with the beautiful mind he possessed.

Will's eyes were closed again, his brows furrowed in thought. “It was a warning as well,” he muttered.

**

Jack didn't leave Will to be for long. As soon as he got a word that he was again up and running, he gave him a call and ordered him to come to the morgue. Jack was being pushy once again because of the stress of having the Ripper on the hunt, and Will felt immediately tedious when the phone call ended.

He had just returned to home and started to greet his dogs, who were thrilled too see him again. When he hadn't been with his dogs, he had made it sure that someone who he trusted would feed them, and he noted with a pleasant smile that they were already fed.

It took him a few moments to change to something more suitable. Dr. Lecter had given him spare clothes to wear when he left, but he felt foreign in them. It was a bit of a mystery as well how he had left the crime scene earlier, as Hannibal hadn't told him anything about that, but he decided that it was maybe better for him not to know.

After an hour's drive he was walking to the morgue, already fearing the new commentary he would be met with. The forensic team liked to always crack a joke about something, and unfortunately he knew that they wouldn't let the issue be. They wanted answers.

Will was greeted with the forensic team hovering over the victim, Jack watching them sharply from his position from the other end of the autopsy table. Jack's eyes were on him at once when he came in, the others raising their heads as well.

No snide remarks were made, as Jack went straight to the point. It was obvious to everyone that he wanted the Ripper behind the bars, and no one dared to interrupt him.

“We've got test results and found a match,” Jack started with a frown, “Alicia Deering, 38 years old teacher. No shady background whatsoever, happily married for ten years. The husband has already identified the body and we know that she had no enemies, although she was a bit short-tempered,” Jack listed out the facts while keeping his eyes on Will, who had gone pale and seemed uncomfortable all of a sudden.

“What is it?” Crawford asked then, narrowing his look at the fidgeting Will.

Everyone's eyes were fixed on him instantly, and Will tried not to think of their piercing gazes for the case's sake, which seemed now unexpectedly important. He cursed that it had took him all of this time to get the main issue of it – he should have understood it right away from how the Ripper had behaved, it was unusual to him, as well as a whole new feature that Will hadn't thought of before.

“It's the victim, Jack,” Will started hesitantly, and Jack turned his stare at the woman on the autopsy table, seemingly not getting what Will was on about.

“She's somehow familiar to you, isn't she? If you watch her now, with no face,” Will proceed his explanation with a grimace.

It took Jack a few minutes until his eyes widened with realization as he let out a curse. He turned his attention to the forensic team and barked orders immediately, until turning to Will again, eyes rare with a blink of worry.

“When was the last time you saw Alana, Will?”

He got his answer as soon as he saw Will's fallen face. They hadn't seen her in days. It was their first priority to make sure that she was safe, after that offer protection. It was all they could do.

“Why Alana?” Jack inquired urgently, trying to coach Will back from his evidently bitter thoughts, not that discussing this case was any better, but it had to be done.

“I... I don't know, Jack... she's close to me,” Will answered doubtfully, earning a look from Jack.

“So you're saying that the Chesapeake Ripper is keeping tabs on you?”

Will shrugged his shoulders, unsure how to express the feelings he felt, the Ripper's feelings, when he saw the crime scene. Instead of trying to work them into words he just nodded and then replied with a faint: “I guess so.”

Jack's eyes narrowed and he pulled his phone out of his pocket.

“We need to inform Dr. Lecter as well. He might be targeted too.”

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the delay.
I'm already working on the next chapter, especially at school, as I have so many free periods. :)

Chapter 22

Hannibal got the news right away after Will left the morgue and headed to his dogs. Jack had been unwilling to let him go without any backup, but he had assured Jack that the Ripper hadn't targeted him so far, so all of it would be in vain.

Returning home was all that Will needed, as he was still exhausted and sore because of all that had happened. So when he opened his front door and his dogs swarmed to greet him, he couldn't be happier to see them.

He took every one of his dogs into a heart-warming embrace and gave them the attention they sought. After the long session of cuddling he made his way to the kitchen and started to prepare something to eat – he hadn't eaten anything for hours. It seemed that every time a new case surfaced he unconsciously started to neglect his own bodily needs.

He wondered if his nightmares would return as well, if he wouldn't be able to sleep anymore as soundly as before – as a little kid. It was the possibility that he feared. It had been so lovely to just let go and be pulled into the dreams that were for once pleasant and far from nightmares. Will knew that he would miss them, like that child-like freedom that he had been offered once again.

A knock sounded suddenly, and it startled Will slightly, pulling him back to present. He wasn't expecting anyone. Walking warily and silently to his front door he opened it to a crack and was faced with Dr. Lecter.

“Hello, Will. I suppose that you haven't eaten yet,” he greeted with a slight smile. Will nodded dumbfound and let the doctor in, making his way back to the kitchen where his own plates stood alone on the table.

Hannibal urged Will to take a seat and placed a still warm tupperware container in front of him, taking a seat himself right opposite of Will, who examined the food with a small and shy smile. He couldn't ever grow bored of Dr. Lecter's cooking.

Rising his eyes from the food he saw Hannibal watching him, and he gave the man a warm smile with an innocent question: “What is this?”

He earned a subtle nod from Hannibal as the doctor explained that he had made Coquilles St. Jacques, which Will gave a nod in return, not really getting what it was by the fancy name.

“I apologize for serving it in such a way, it would deserve far greater display,” Hannibal commented before Will took a bite of it and felt the creamy texture melting in his mouth. He hummed at the taste and when he took another forkful he noticed that he had closed his eyes momentarily. A fine blush crept to his cheeks as he glanced at Dr. Lecter, their eyes making a quick eye contact. It lasted just a few seconds, but he relaxed immediately and felt a warm breeze going through him.

“I heard the news from Jack,” Hannibal interrupted his eating, making Will fidget in his seat.

“They offered me protection,” he proceed while keeping his eyes on Will, who was now gripping his fork so forcefully that his knuckles were turning white.

“You shouldn't be near me,” Will whispered then, his eyes lowered on the still steaming food that reminded himself of the fact that Dr. Lecter was indeed right opposite of him.

Hannibal stayed silent, whereas Will couldn't help but open his mouth a few times, before bitterly grimacing as he lowered the fork on the table and glanced at him.

“Alana is innocent,” he started, seeking for any comforting words that she would be safe, that nothing had happened. “She hasn't ever done anything vicious, she's not unkind.”

Hannibal sat silently in his seat and let Will to deal with his sentiment, listening like always. He hadn't thought of getting rid of Alana earlier, as she hadn't been a threat before, but after trying to mess with his plans and the development he had acquired, he had had second thoughts. It had really been a coincidence that he had spotted Alicia, but she had been a perfect replacement, killing Alana *now* had no point at all.

Will tried to even out his breathing, his emotions all over the place. What if he wouldn't see Alana ever again? What if the next time he would see her would be on her own scene? He would have to re-experience the ripping, see how *he himself* ripper her, inflicted the pain and saw the life leave her body and her expressive eyes. He couldn't deal with that. Even the idea of it made him feel terrible, like he had already taken her life.

Will shivered and noticed that his vision was blurred with unshed tears. He made a quick gaze at Hannibal, who rose from his seat and took a place on his side instead.

“You're in a fragile state, dear Will,” Hannibal whispered whilst he brought his hand on to Will's head, stroking his hair like he had before. “You're going to be all right.” Will closed his eyes and leant on the caressing hand. “I'll make sure of it.”

**

Will felt warm and cozy when he opened his eyes, it seemed that he had fallen asleep from exhaustion. But as he observed his surroundings he noticed that he was in his bedroom, not in the kitchen where he had been before. He let his eyes travel to his side and saw how Cleo had curled beside him.

All of his dogs had taken their places around his bed, sleeping like guards nearby. Will's lips curled into a smile and he closed his eyes for a minute. He could smell the sweet scent of his home – the wood and fresh grass, rain. It all lingered in the air, came inside every time he opened windows and let the wind breeze in.

He had been for days away, seeing his dogs only when it was arranged. It felt so distant already, as if it had all been a dream – like one of his nightmares, but not quite.

It felt unreal to lie on his own bed now when he had accustomed to the fine sheets clinging to his body, the big plush bed swallowing him up every time he climbed onto it. The fine and

subtle scent of violet in the air. Hannibal's home had been luxury, something he couldn't ever afford.

Will opened his eyes once more and stretched, turning his head to the nightstand, planning on taking his glasses when a piece of paper got his attention. He sat up on the bed and soothed his dogs that noticed the movement. He took the note and recognized the handwriting straight away. It was the familiar cursive he had only seen in Hannibal's notes. Will wet his lips nervously before he read the message:

Dear Will,
you were so utterly exhausted that I chose to leave you to rest. We may return to our discussion another time, when you're feeling at ease again.
I request that you'll call me when you're ready.

Hannibal Lecter

Will felt relieved, but embarrassed. Hannibal had given him time to sort his thoughts out, but he had fallen asleep on him, which meant that he had been carried to bed – like a child. He sighed to himself and ran his fingers through Winston's fur, placing the note back on the nightstand. Winston answered with a yawn to Will's gentle petting.

“I don't want to think about it,” he whispered then, earning a look from Winston. “It just makes me feel worse,” Will reasoned.

**

Days passed and there was no word from Alana, Will getting restless, not being able to focus on any work. Jack was just as irritated and took it off on his team, who struggled to find anything at all – at least one lead to follow. It started to feel like a defeat and everyone was downhearted.

No one was as agitated as Jack though, who had feared that something like this would happen once again, like before with Miriam. He ground his teeth together as he once again got a confirmation from Beverly that there were still no leads.

The whole workplace had turned to a silent and depressive hole that everyone crawled into daily. There were no laughs, jokes or snide remarks like usually, just calm quiet that pierced the air.

Will hadn't called Hannibal yet and he hadn't seen him for a few days. He appreciated the space, but it made him lonely as well. He had grown familiar to his constant presence and now everything felt just empty, there was no warmth whenever he went, it just felt wrong. As if he lived without any colors, trapped into a reality of black and white.

The first days he had grieved, for he knew that Alana was gone for good, if it really was the Ripper's handiwork. No one saw daylight after being picked out as his victim. Everyone got their conviction sooner or later, wanted they it or not. Will knew that it was his fault that Alana had become the next victim, he shouldn't have expressed any of his feelings for her, he

should have stayed away like before. And now he tried to distance himself from Hannibal so that he wouldn't have to bear another loss.

The nightmares had returned as well, just as Will had feared, and he woke up every night soaked with sweat, gasping for air. He could remember all of his dreams afterwards, how terrifying and gruesome they had been and who had to suffer every time. The victims varied from his workmates to people he couldn't remember, but was sure he had seen somewhere before.

Two weeks passed with Will looking like his old miserable self, again suffering from insomnia and still mild hallucinations. One night he woke up and noticed that he was crying, his cheeks wet with salty tears he hadn't felt before opening his eyes in the darkness. The dream still fresh in his mind he sat up on his bed and stretched for his phone with trembling hands. He couldn't cope anymore. Not like this.

Chapter 23

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The shivers ran down his spine, piercing him with cold. His t-shirt was once again soaked with sweat, and it clung to him like a second skin. After he had groped the phone into his hand, he stared at it with glossy eyes, not really wanting to disturb Hannibal in this ungodly hour. He had already resorted to him so many times it felt wrong, but he didn't have anyone else left at this point – Alana had disappeared.

And that thought burned his eyes again with new forming tears. He pressed a few buttons on his phone and swallowed down a sob. He had to do this. Hannibal was the only one he could trust.

The phone rang a couple of times, Will barely hearing the beeps through his rapidly thrumming heart. It felt to Will like he had to wait forever before the phone was picked, but truly it took only a few seconds. When he heard the familiar, smooth voice at the other end of the line, it was blurred to him, his ears ringing with the blood humming in them.

“Will?” Hannibal asked after a moment, hearing only rapid breathing from the line.

He had to try and steady his breathing before he got anything out of his mouth, fearing that hyperventilating would make him pass out – make the doctor more worried than he already presumably was. He counted his breaths and got his mind a bit clearer after the struggle.

“D-Dr. Lecter,” he rasped into the phone, clenching it in his hand. “I can't do this anymore,” he pleaded, his eyes starting to shimmer again.

He took a few deep breathes trying to calm himself, not wanting to break before Hannibal. He had seen him miserable already plenty of times, and he was sure that the man could tell from his voice that he was losing it again. He hated it, how everyone saw him always so weak – like he was crumbling into pieces.

However, the soft voice that greeted him gave him a pleasant feeling of security, and he could feel his limbs and throbbing heart relaxing with the reassuring words.

“You're alright, Will. Tell me what happened,” he heard Hannibal's silky voice in his ear.

Will nodded numbly, recalling then that Hannibal couldn't see him, so he swallowed and replied with a faint: “Okay.”

He wiped away the tears that were threatening to fall on his cheeks and took in a deep breath. Hannibal waited patiently on the line, hearing a faint rustle and then tranquil breaths. He checked the time whilst waiting Will to speak up, and it was two in the morning. It was obvious that Will had had a nightmare again, he had been positive that they would return

now, and it took only a few weeks. It seemed like Will had returned entirely back to normal after his extraordinary change. It was such a pity, really.

Still, Hannibal was quite satisfied for the process he had acquired. Will was now dependent on him, seeking for his help, reaching for him, willingly. It hadn't taken as much time as he had first anticipated, but it still was a victory. A complete one.

Hearing a wheeze from Will's end, he tuned back in and listened to the other's breathing. Will took his time, trying to find the words. Hannibal didn't mind, since he enjoyed hearing Will's breaths. He was able to tell from those in what kind of state of mind he was.

“Dr. Lecter?” Will's voice wavered then. Hannibal smiled to himself and leant on his pillow that was reposed on his bed's headboard.

“When you're ready, Will,” he answered with a gentle tone.

There was an intake of breath, and then a gasp. Hannibal's brows furrowed slightly and he heard Will's breathing becoming labored again. He heard a rustle and then something breaking.

“Fuck!”

Hannibal's eyes narrowed, and then he heard Will again, this time whispering: “I- It's here again – coming here, I- I can't-”

“What is coming there, Will?” Hannibal asked, curious. He could hear the fear in Will's voice loud and clear.

“I-It's the stag,” he stuttered, “it has never been violent before- o-oh God.”

Will had told him about it before, he remembered the time and day perfectly well. It was those days when all Will had were nightmares. He was in a bad condition, Jack had made him slave away at work and there were at least three cases going on. Will had started to suffer from hallucinations, and the stag, apparently, was one of them. Hannibal had found it fascinating and wasn't still exactly sure what Will's subconscious wanted to tell him with the stag, but he was aware of the fact that Will might have captured the image from the statue he had in his office. It had seemed that even Will wasn't conscious of what it meant – it just was. And like now, it was real, just like before.

“Will,” Hannibal coached, “listen to me. You're hallucinating.”

“No, no, no, I can see it, it's right there,” Will panicked.

Hannibal moved his blanket aside and got up, made his bed while listening to Will's ramblings on the line, and decided that he had no better way to get the other to calm down than to go over his house. There he could as well convince that all Will saw was just a hallucination, nothing real.

Whispers came to a halt abruptly. All Hannibal could hear was Will's breathing, fast and unsteady. He started to make his way to the wardrobe, intending to get dressed as quickly as

possible. He had to leave Will for a moment, a bit longer than he actually preferred, because of the one hour distance. However, Hannibal knew that at this time of the night there wouldn't be as much traffic as usually, so he could violate the speed limits. Whatever he wouldn't do for dear Will's sake?

“Will, stay where you are. I'm coming there,” he informed finally, hearing a sob and then a faint reply.

**

It took Hannibal a bit over half an hour to arrive to Wolf Trap, and when he came to a halt and got out of his car, he could already see that everything wasn't quite okay. Will's house stood there in the dark without any lights. He started to make his way to the house and noticed that the front door wasn't even locked. Hannibal pulled his lips into a thin line as he strolled into the house.

It was pitch black so it was no wonder that Will's mind was such a mess. Darkness was everything it took to get the imagination to go wild. He couldn't first hear anything at all, but when he came to the living room he saw all of Will's dogs curled on the floor, right beside each other, and heard their snuffling.

By the look of it, Will was in the bedroom, and that's where Hannibal made his way instantly. He hoped that Will wouldn't be in a worse condition than before, but it was only realistic to expect that. He couldn't hear anything when he opened the door to Will's bedroom. It was just as dark as the whole house itself, and when he took the scene in, he couldn't even see Will anywhere. Still, he was certain that Will hadn't left the house, he was able to smell him – that sweet, warm fevered scent of him floated in the air.

He took a few steps into the room and paused. It didn't take a genius to realize where Will was hiding, it was such a cliche, but he didn't want to startle him further, so he stayed still and listened. He was able to distinguish a very subdued breathing, it was so quiet that he was sure that Will was trying not to emit a sound. He took one step closer tentatively and remained then again still.

“Will?” he asked then, trying to get the other to recognize his voice. There was no answer, just a frightened gasp.

He could tell that Will was still hallucinating, and it was the most tricky part in this, he wasn't sure that he could just wait for Will to snap out of it – it would take hours, but he didn't want to terrify Will further either. He had no idea what kind of hallucinations he was having at the moment, it would be too risky.

The only solution he could think of was to use his cell phone. He took a seat on Will's bed and heard Will wheezing under it. Taking his phone out of his pocket he dialed Will. There was a short-lived melody, Will fiddling with the phone with his trembling hands before he answered with a faint whisper: “D-Dr. Lecter?”

Hannibal sighed inwardly. At least he had answered the phone in these circumstances. He changed his tone to the soft and reassuring, when he replied to Will, hearing then a sigh of

gratitude.

“I'm right here, Will, there's nothing to fear,” he prompted, trying to get Will to focus on his voice. It was like coaching a child out of his nightmares, giving security, offering someone to trust.

“Are you still hallucinating?” Hannibal asked, already aware of the answer he would get. He could hear Will's breathing in his ear now, unsteady. He didn't dare to speak otherwise than whisper, like there was a predator in the room with him. Hannibal smiled to himself at the image.

“Y- Yes, I think,” Will replied, making Hannibal shift on the bed. The movement made Will's heart hammer more profoundly.

“Will,” Hannibal started then whilst smoothing the bed sheets with his other hand, “it's just me, you and your dogs. There's no one else in this house.”

He could still smell the fear in the air, strong and thick. It blended mightily into Will's own scent, and it almost made Hannibal's head swim. He gripped the bed sheets with his hand and breathed it in, hearing Will breathe now without the hitch.

It took at least five minutes until Will had calmed entirely down, and five more minutes still, until he crawled out from under the bed. Hannibal's eyes were on Will instantly, and he noticed how young he looked. Fear made him look like a frightened little boy, just like he had been a few weeks ago. The image was quite adorable, to be honest, and Hannibal let a gentle smile slip to his lips.

Will was on his arms instantly, burying his head into Hannibal's neck and trembling all over. He was Will's only refuge, and he couldn't let go of the man who felt so stable and strong against him. Will tried to get his nerves in check again, as he took a hold of Hannibal's suit jacket and inhaled the warm, safe scent of him.

“Shhh, you're alright, Will,” Hannibal murmured to him whilst stroking his hair. He didn't mind his suit wrinkling, not for Will.

They stayed like that for half an hour, until Will was completely calmed down and wasn't shivering anymore. He hadn't dared to close his eyes because he feared that he would see the murderers again, lurking in his mind, trying to get the chance to show themselves.

Hannibal's hand was still on his hair, caressing his brown locks, making Will feel sleepy. He yawned and spared a look to his alarm clock, it was almost four in the morning. He wouldn't get any sleep anymore, he had to be at work today as well. He sighed, feeling how Hannibal's hand paused. Will turned his head upwards, capturing the other's gaze for a second.

“You don't have to go to work today, Will,” Hannibal whispered into the darkness as a reply to his stare. Will shook his head.

“No, I have to. Jack-”

“Jack can wait. You're in no state to go to work today, and you know that as well.”

Will lowered his head onto Hannibal's chest again and closed his eyes now. The warm hand resumed its task and he could hear the other's heartbeat. He was safe here with Hannibal.

Chapter End Notes

Cuddling is the best cure.

Chapter 24

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will sat on his couch, his dogs still lying on the carpet and keeping their eyes on him, noting his uneasiness. Will stared ahead, watching Hannibal lighting a fire in the fireplace. He already felt more calm, but he couldn't chase away the tugging feeling of worry. Now that his eyes were fixed on the man before him, he felt concerned.

The fire flickered in the otherwise dark room, shaping shadows to every wall. Will kept his gaze in the warm flame when Hannibal returned beside him, took a seat on the couch and leaned into it. He could tell that he was being observed, he felt Hannibal's eyes on him, but he didn't stir from his position, he felt at ease.

The comfortable silence was interrupted when Will's phone rang. He startled and searched his phone in his pocket, seeing then that it wasn't none other than Jack. He crumbled and was about to answer when the phone was snatched from his hand. He turned his head to his side, seeing Hannibal answering the phone himself. It was unusual, seeing him like this.

Will's heartbeat thundered in his chest. He hoped that Hannibal could somehow convince Jack so that he wouldn't have to go, he didn't need that depressing atmosphere right now. He just wanted to be, enjoy the comfortable presence of his dogs and Hannibal.

The call didn't last as long as Will had first predicted. He raised his eyes to Hannibal, his expression full of concern, but the man gave him a small smile.

“I just talked with Jack and convinced him to give you a day-off,” Hannibal said then, making Will sigh with relief.

He didn't stir from his comfortable place on the couch, and soon enough Hannibal again took a place beside him. He handed Will the phone, Will taking it with trembling hands and placing it back into his pocket. They sat there watching the fire burn and listened to the dog's snuffling.

To Will, Hannibal was the only one he felt comfortable with beside his dogs. He liked the warm feeling he always brought with him, it was pleasant and comfy. It felt always so safe to be beside him. Will blinked and stirred when he felt the couch sink next to him, Hannibal crossing his legs and turning to him.

“What's on your mind, Will?” he asked with subtle curiosity, his eyes taking in Will's distant gaze. Will gave him a sad smile and shook his head.

“It's just the nightmares..,” Will started reluctantly, glancing then to Dr. Lecter whose eyes were fixed on him. Will sighed, “I had a dream before I called you.”

He hated thinking about it, since all of it had felt so real; he could still feel the blood on his hands, see it so clearly, even smell it. It had felt like it hadn't been a dream. Will shivered at the memory of it. Hannibal placed his hand on his knee and Will jumped, caught in the images still fresh in his mind.

“What was the dream about?” he heard Hannibal distantly, focusing then entirely to the question and pressing his eyes closed. Hannibal's warm hand was reassuring, grounding, and all he could do was to focus on his breathing, when he finally whispered: “I saw you dead.”

Will could feel the silence becoming oppressing. He didn't dare to open his eyes, but just listened, trying to steady his breaths at the same time. He didn't feel like embarrassing himself further after his yet another breakdown. However, Hannibal's voice was gentle when he reassured him that he wasn't planning on dying anytime soon. Will gave him a broken laugh at that and opened finally his eyes, being sure that he wouldn't start crying. He was greeted with Dr. Lecter's dark, yet affectionate irises.

“I don't like this,” Will mumbled then, burying his head into his hands, pressing his palms against his eyelids, seeing stars. Hannibal caressed his knee before he withdrew his hand entirely.

“What is it that you don't like?” he asked after a while, receiving a blank stare from Will.

“*This*! Nightmares, hallucinations, my whole mind just being a damn mess. I liked it better when I was a kid,” he confessed, taking the whole issue into discussion for the first time. Hannibal hid his smile and turned his gaze on the remaining flames in the fireplace.

“I'm quite sure you're going to be alright, dear Will,” he stated then, making Will blush at the nickname he had received while being a kid.

**

The day went by slowly, and after they had eaten breakfast Hannibal had to excuse himself because of his appointments with his patients. When the door closed and Will was left alone, he felt cold and foreign, even with his dogs with him. He couldn't put his finger on the reason why he felt so weird, but guessed then that it had to be because he had spent so much time with Hannibal. He had been with him the whole time when he was a kid, and now when that comfortable feeling was found again, it broke immediately when he left.

Will chewed his lower lip and sank back into the couch, now again cold as they had enjoyed the breakfast in kitchen. Will closed his eyes and dozed off, feeling how Winston lay down before him, Cleo right behind. The puppy had grown already a bit, but she was still liftable, and Will enjoyed to cuddle with her. She had already a large place in Will's heart, and he loved her just as much as his other strays, he didn't like to play favorites.

He couldn't keep still for long, however, because he couldn't stop thinking. Everything occupied his mind from getting rest. The Ripper was on loose and his next victims would probably be all of the people close to him. Will had buried Alana far away from his mind, the whole case too much for him to bear. He knew that she was most likely already dead, but he

still hadn't stopped for hoping that one day she would just come to visit him like she usually did.

Will screwed his eyes shut and breathed, feeling Winston nuzzling his knee. The presence of his dogs was the only reassurance with him now, and he appreciated that they snuggled closer to him always when they noticed that he wasn't feeling well.

Hannibal had told him that he would be back later, and that thought kept Will warm as well. He hadn't ever let him down, Hannibal had always been there when Will needed him, keeping him from crumbling. The past few weeks had changed everything – their relationship had become more complicated than it had been before. Will wasn't still sure what to make of the whole situation. He wanted to get closer to Hannibal, who was sheer stability, but at the same time he was afraid of the nearness. He hadn't ever thought that he would be as close with someone as he was with Hannibal now.

Will startled when his phone rang again – it was Jack again. He sighed and doubted that the man would have anything pleasant to tell to him, he would probably demand him to come to work even though he had talked with Hannibal in the morning. He answered the phone on the fourth ring and was greeted with grumpiness.

“There's no leads at all, Will. It's highly possible that we'll never find Alana unless the Ripper wants us to find her,” Jack stated with irritation. Will sighed and closed his eyes.

“It was to be expected, Jack. He's not sloppy, he knows what he's doing,” Will answered after a while, trying to keep his voice from wavering. “If we catch him, it's either he wants to get caught, or he reveals something without intending to. I doubt that's going to happen any time soon, Jack.”

“*When* we catch him, Will,” Jack corrected, making Will roll his eyes. “I want him caught and it's not going to happen if you won't come to work. You know that we need you here.”

“I know,” Will mumbled and leant his head onto his palm.

“Good. I'll talk to Dr. Lecter,” Jack said then and bid Will goodbye.

Will groaned and threw his phone onto the near table, stomping then off to his bedroom and burying himself under the covers like a petulant kid. He pressed his hand into his pillow and closed his eyes, trying not to think of anything. Soon after he fell asleep.

**

Hannibal knocked onto Will's door for the third time, but there was still no answer whatsoever. He doubted that Will had actually left anywhere, he was still too traumatized from the last night to try anything too rash. Hannibal wet his lips and tried the handle, and of course the door was unlocked *again*. He truly had to teach Will that it wasn't wise to leave the doors open, he mused when he made his way to the empty living room where he had left Will earlier.

There were only his dogs again, but this time they felt somehow tense and restless. Hannibal had seen them like that only when Will was in a bad mood himself. He took in the whole scenery, seeing Will's phone tossed onto the table, the carpet crumpled and pillows scattered around the room. He felt his lips twitch, when he imagined Will leaving the room with fury.

He made his way straight to Will's bedroom, ignoring the kitchen entirely. He was quite sure that Will hadn't eaten anything after he had left, either he hadn't been hungry or didn't feel like eating – as usual. It seemed to be his task now to get Will to eat, and he couldn't say that he didn't enjoy it. It felt always pleasant to watch someone else enjoying his cooking, especially Will, who expressed every emotion on his face so clearly.

As soon as he entered the room he could smell the tang of Will and his eyes fixed immediately onto the lump of covers that rose and fell with Will's breath. Hannibal smiled to himself and took a step closer, coming to stand beside the bed.

“Will?” he called then with a light and gentle tone.

The lump stirred and Hannibal's eyes narrowed minutely. He replaced his frown with a small smile when Will's head popped up from the covers. It was to be expected, Hannibal pondered as he greeted bemused Will. He took a seat beside Will, who had now sat up and looked at him with a horrified expression. Hannibal watched him silently, waiting for Will to say something, but apparently he had become dumbstruck. He offered Will his hand and the other clung to it desperately.

“Are you alright?” Hannibal asked then, trying to coax Will to speak to him. He received an unsure nod as Will crawled closer to him.

“I can't believe it,” Will said after many silent moments. “Please, say this is a dream.”

Hannibal smiled at him and shook his head slightly. He took Will's hand into his and ran his fingertips over the smaller hand, caressing it lightly.

“I'm afraid you're not dreaming, dear Will.”

That got Will's attention and he swallowed thickly. He didn't know what to do. He had thought that it would be over and done with, even though he had *hoped*, silently. It had to be because of that.

“Jack is going to kill me,” he whispered then, making Hannibal pull his lips into a tight line. Will maintained his gaze on their hands. It felt unreal, once again.

“I said that I liked it as a kid, but-”

“I know,” Hannibal said, stroking Will's hair, trying to make him loosen up. The shock was still overwhelming, but he felt Will leaning onto his hand. “I'll take care of you, Will,” Hannibal said then, making Will lift his eyes up to him.

“...Okay,” he whispered and curled closer to Hannibal, not anymore thinking of anything at all – he needed this safety that was offered to him.

The End

Chapter End Notes

I want to thank you for reading this fic to its end! ♥
It was kind of a surprise to me as well that it ended now, but I had actually planned to end this soonish. Please don't eat me.

Huge thanks to my lovely beta, I wouldn't have gotten this fic here as it is now without you! It's also my first time when I've written this long fic - and it's actually my first one in English as well. :3

My friends were also a great support to me, I got more ideas while talking with them, so thank you. ♥

There's a *short* epilogue for those who want to read it; a glance of what became of Will's life.

Epilogue

Their lives had taken a new turn, and Will had to confess that he hadn't ever been happier. He had left his job since he had no choice, and he was secretly pleased with the new freedom it offered him.

Jack had been furious and hadn't wanted to let Will go, but after a while he realized that there was nothing he could actually do to keep Will with the team. However, that didn't mean that he stopped from calling him and trying to make him take a look of crime scene photos.

The forensic team, and especially Beverly, was the only one who was truly happy for Will, who was for once able to enjoy his life without the constant nightmares – were he awake or not. She took it upon herself on visiting him as well, since she found Will by her words adorable, and liked to spend time with him.

Will moved soon after in with Hannibal, because it was hard to stay away from his dogs. He was surprised that Hannibal allowed them into his house so readily, and that made Will smile. He startled Hannibal with a hug and ran then to his dogs like an overjoyed little boy he was.

The sight made him feel warm, and he silently thanked Jack for driving Will into this madness. It was all thanks to him that he had acquired such a close bond with Will. All he had to hope was it to last.

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